

悪夢の棲む家

ゴーストハント

小野不由美

上

white
heart



The House in Which Nightmares Dwell - Ghost Hunt

Volume 01

Author: Ono Fuyumi

Translation: [yonakayaku](#)

Publisher: [Yuki](#)

Table of Contents

[Prologue](#)

[Chapter 1: Part 1](#)

[Chapter 1: Part 2](#)

[Chapter 1: Part 3](#)

[Chapter 1: Part 4](#)

[Chapter 2: Part 1](#)

[Chapter 2: Part 2](#)

[Chapter 2: Part 3](#)

[Chapter 2: Part 4](#)

[Chapter 2: Part 5](#)

[Chapter 3: Part 1](#)

[Chapter 3: Part 2](#)

[Chapter 3: Part 3](#)

[Chapter 3: Part 4](#)

[Chapter 3: Part 5](#)

[Chapter 3: Part 6](#)

[Chapter 4: Part 1](#)

[Chapter 4: Part 2](#)

[Chapter 4: Part 3](#)

[Chapter 4: Part 4](#)

[Chapter 4: Part 5](#)

[Chapter 5: Part 1](#)

[Chapter 5: Part 2](#)

[Chapter 5: Part 3](#)

[Chapter 5: Part 4](#)

[Chapter 5: Part 5](#)

[Chapter 6: Part 1](#)

[Chapter 6: Part 2](#)

[Chapter 6: Part 3](#)

[Chapter 6: Part 4](#)

[Chapter 6: Part 5](#)

[Chapter 7: Part 1](#)

[Chapter 7: Part 2](#)

[Chapter 7: Part 3](#)

[Chapter 7: Part 4](#)

[Chapter 7: Part 5](#)

[Chapter 7: Part 6](#)

[Afterword](#)

Prologue

The inner part of the long and straight corridor was sunken inside darkness.

Midori stood motionless on the concrete floor of the entranceway. Bright midday sunlight poured out from the dormer, and brightened the floorboards of the corridor. Despite that, the light was unable to reach beyond the long straight hallway going deep into the house. Midori's body intercepted the light as well, causing the darkness to remain in the corridor's inner part. It was because of this, that the passageway seemed like a tunnel with an unknown destination.

It was exactly now, for some reason or the other, that the sounds suddenly ceased.

Inside the house, not even a hushed sound could be heard, and there was no indication of a human presence. An unapproachable atmosphere brimmed just as if it was nervously waiting for something.

Sounds from the outside couldn't be heard any longer.

-- It was as if *nobody was around any longer*.

(Where is mother?)

Midori felt uneasy all of a sudden.

(Where is mother?)

Why would it be so quiet? It was as if this house was completely empty. How could it be so unapproachable, dark, and lonely?

(Where?)

"What's the matter?"

There was a sudden voice from behind, causing Midori to blink rapidly.

"Hey Midori, it's still beautiful right?"

Midori turned her head around at hearing her mother's voice. Mother smiled as she locked the door from the inside of the entranceway.

"It doesn't look like a house that was built 20 years ago, right? It was just renovated, but originally it was a well-made building."

Mixed sounds came from the single door that separated the house from the outside. The light that poured in through the patterned glass of a small window was white.

"They told me the former owner rented it for a long time, and lived on his own while repairing it. Everything is uniform from the illumination to the curtain rail, and both the kitchen and the bath have been very well made."

"... ..I see," Midori said finally. Her mother Reiko opened a shoe rack and showed it somewhat proudly.

"See, he even had a shoe rack made."

"Yeah."

While Reiko, who had been standing earlier, continued to take off her shoes, Midori examined the corridor. It was dark as usual, but once Reiko switched on the light, which was shaped in the form of an egg yolk, it was made possible to examine the inner part.

"Even though he finished his renovations and had just moved in, he went away to live with a son somewhere far away, leaving this behind. -- Here's the living room."

There was a door with a glass plane on it to the right of the passageway, Reiko opened it, laughed merrily, and showed the inside. Midori looked once more over the corridor.

Midori grew frightened for a moment. There was a shadow of a person in the inner corridor, but when she looked closely, it was her own figure, she sighed softly.

At the end of the hallway was a large full-length mirror, and before that were the stairs. On the right of the hallway were two doors and a sliding screen. On the left, there was another door and a sliding screen. The inner corridor was T-shaped and at the end of that wall was the location of this full-length mirror.

-- It was as dark as she had expected it to be. Midori frowned; they would have to go through this elongated corridor in a long and narrow house without a single source of daylight. She wondered if the darkness could get to the point where it would actually feel dreadful. An abrupt form of anxiety took over her.

Midori awkwardly attempted to laugh.

Of course, nobody appeared to be here because there was no one living in this house yet. Even though she had known that, she had suddenly become anxious and wanted to confirm her mother's whereabouts.

(Something is wrong.)

"-- Midori? Aren't you looking?"

Reiko stuck her head out from the living room.

"I was only looking at the corridor. -- Is that the living room?"

Midori's father had been a serious economist, if he had retired he would have bought a house in the suburbs and made savings untiringly, but he died suddenly ten years before his retirement. Her father's dream was also her mother's dream, and it was because of this that Midori had not opposed her mother's sudden desire of wanting to buy a house when the first death anniversary had passed.

The only breadwinner of the house had died leaving behind housewife Reiko, and Midori who had been looking for employment for two years, so buying a house and the like was not to be expected. Likewise, if Midori had married before that, she would not have been able to live in her newly purchased house. It was acceptable, but she did not want her mother to worry about the rent. If they had a place to live in, even if it meant they would be barely getting by later on, they'd be able to live their daily life. It was because she kept this train of thought that she had agreed. Reiko moved about on her own and on part of Midori, who could not lessen her time at work, discovering this house because of that.

"-- See, it's great, don't you think?"

Seemingly, proud, Reiko opened the sliding door. In the living room, there was plenty of light streaming in, and it didn't give a bad impression. The corner of the room had been made into a dust outlet facing a small garden.

"We could have something like flowers grow there."

Reiko's voice was happy. She had lived in an apartment for a long time, so she'd be happy to have a house with a garden.

"Seems like it. -- Is this the south?"

"Yes. The sunlight is good here. It's a bit narrow, but maintaining a spacious garden is too much, right."

"Yeah. Perhaps this is just right."

"Here's the dining kitchen," said the cheerful Reiko opening a glass door that continued to the next room.

"Wow, it's big."

"In the past this room consisted of a Japanese-style living room and a kitchen that were remodelled into this dining kitchen. Could this be why the kitchen is very big?"

There was a counter, about six tatami mats long and narrow, in the inner part of the dining room. Beyond that was the kitchen. It was wide, and seemed comfortable for two women to move about and do kitchen work.

"The wet area is also very luxuriously made."

Reiko beckoned from beyond the side of the counter. She seemed completely happy, but Midori inclined her head in doubt as she looked at the wall on her right. Exactly in the place where a window should be, a mirror had been placed. Due to the mirror, the dining room looked unnecessarily wide. There weren't any other windows, which would give light.

"Hey, for what reason is there a mirror in that place?"

When Midori said it aloud, Reiko said 'aah' and stared at the mirror.

"It's a window, actually."

"Huh?" Midori said, examining the mirror. When she looked at it, she understood that it was not just a mere mirror; a window frame of aluminium sash ran around the mirror that had been inserted into the double sliding window instead of glass.

"The neighbour's wall is directly outside."

Midori opened the window, looking outside she saw that there was about 15 centimetres of isolated space between the neighbour's wall.

-- I'm shocked. Isn't this an illegal construction?"

"The house next door is absurdly built, isn't it? -- At any rate, the light won't come in, and a drainage is located below the window. They said that if you leave it open in summertime or something, the smell comes in. Because of that, it's been done that way. Doesn't it feel a bit like they're joking?"

"... .. I wonder if it's really like that."

Looking in the direction of Reiko, who was repeatedly opening and closing the cupboards, the windows of the kitchen also contained a mirror. -- In other words, it meant that it was impossible to have sunlight in the dining kitchen.

However, Reiko was not at all in a state of concern.

"What an interesting place. All of the other rooms are also like this."

"Eh?" Midori said, and looked back at Reiko's face, "All of them?"

"It was changed because three sides of the house are built to stick together, so light doesn't enter at all, and the wind also doesn't pass through."

"-- Wait a minute. All of them? So, there are no windows at all?"

"There was one in the living room, wasn't there?"

"Only that one?"

"There's also a window on the second floor facing the balcony."

Midori went to the corridor quickly.

On the right of the corridor next to the dining kitchen, there was a four and a half tatami-mat-sized Japanese room. A small closet was located in the place where she turned the corridor. On the left side, in the direction of the entranceway, there was a bathroom with a bath and a small storage room. When she turned left in the corridor there was a small toilet. There were no windows containing transparent glass.

On the second floor, she faced a Japanese room, four and a half tatami long, after climbing the stairs. There was a six tatami-sized Western-

style room, and a seven tatami-sized Japanese-style room located inside. Apart from the dust outlet facing the balcony, there were only windows with mirrors in the three bedrooms.

The only mirrors that were actually not windows were the mirror in the bathroom and the full-length mirror. The mirror in the bathroom was attached to the washing unit; hence, it was different as expected. On the other hand, the full-length mirror was embedded into the wall, and it seemed like a window at first glance, but it rose from the floor and ended near the ceiling. Also, its edges were not made of aluminium sash like the other windows, but was constructed of plain wood.

Despite the building being squeezed from three sides, she couldn't open the neighbour's window directly outside their own. The wall just barely touched the neighbour's house, so most light could not enter. Midori was shocked that the windows had been filled with mirrors.

When she ran down the stairs, Reiko just smiled at her.

"-- And? Isn't it great?"

"Great? Don't joke about it, mother. There're really no windows that have light coming in."

Reiko looked blankly at her.

"Even if there were, they would be useless."

"Do you really feel like living in this house?"

"It's cheap because the lighting is so bad. An apartment is also something like this, so it's not something to worry about in particular, right?"

"That's true, but..."

"I wonder," she said, "if that's why it was essential to change all of the glass into mirrors?"

-- It was as if they weren't allowed to see outside the window.

This sudden thought crossed Midori's mind like that.

"The price is only just that, and it can't be helped if things are more or less like this. The storage is plenty and there are many rooms. Isn't it fine?"

"... .. But we're not renting it. We can't just move houses if we don't find it pleasing after trying to live here... .."

"It's a house for sale, so I can't be pleased with just about everything."

Midori collected her breath after being rebuked. It was certain that the house was unusually cheap. For the mother and daughter, the location was good, the amount of space was fine, and a house was something that they had hoped for.

"I haven't found a house with a price this cheap. It's a bit problematic when we go shopping, but the station is close. The city centre is also near, and because of that it's convenient."

"That's true, but..." Midori muttered in resignation.

"Don't say it has to be luxurious. You don't like commuting to work that takes one or two hours, right?"

"Yeah," Midori nodded somewhat looking at Reiko's face.

"... .. Hey, isn't it too cheap?" Midori asked, despite her contradictory admission of words to her mother. Certainly, she thought that it was cheap if they could buy this house with that kind of a price. She could understand that the lighting was bad, and the reason given for it was old age of the house. In spite of that, she had a hunch that the cost was far too low. It was rare for houses to be up on sale these days, as well. The interior design, facilities and price of this place were comparatively too good to be true. "Could there still be something else here?"

"Something? What is?"

"I'm saying that could be there something else in this building that has faulty points, or other causes that they had to sell it this cheap?"

"Idiot, I told you about the circumstances of the owner, didn't I? He wanted to sell it in a big hurry in order to live with his son. If, at least, it makes some money, then it's okay, I'd say."

"But... .."

"Fortune has been good to us. If this was doubled from now on, it wouldn't be strange."

"Right," Midori muttered, sighing on the inside. It had been many days since she had seen Reiko's lively face after her father's death, and it was difficult to argue with her because of that.

"Mother is pleased with it... .."

"It's a treasure," Reiko continued to say with a smile on her face. *"I will definitely regret it."*

"Eh," Midori stared at Reiko's face.

"Oh myoh no," Reiko turned faintly red. "Oh no, I'm getting old. -- I won't regret something like that, definitely."

Midori smiled.

"Well, it's fine. It's for your sake."

Reiko showed a smile.

"Well then, let's quickly get out, while there's still nothing bad happening."

-- Mother?"

Reiko blinked a little, and restrained her mouth in dismay.

"Oh, that's no good. -- I wanted to say that we should quickly get out and finish the formalities before you change your mind."

"Mother, are you all right? You're already becoming rather senile."

Reiko showed a grimacing face.

"For your sake, don't say awful things. I'm not at such an age yet."

Midori laughed. When Reiko laughed along, the sound of a door opening somewhere happened. A small girl's voice could be heard.

-- I'm home.

Reiko looked at Midori.

"That must be the girl of the neighbours. I wonder if she's from next door?"

"The echoes are very audible."

-- Mother, I've returned.

"Speaking of which, you almost seem like a sister-in-law who can't stop complaining."

"Yes, yes."

-- Mother, where are you?

Reiko laughed as she descended to the entranceway, and Midori followed her. When the light went off, the long corridor once again returned to darkness.

-- Mother.

-- Hey, where are you... ...?

Chapter 1: Part 1

Tokyo, Dougenzaka in Shibuya.

Hirota approached *that* building, and without thinking, unintentionally started to turn around.

But I must, he thought, pulling himself together even though he did nothing but hesitate.

It was the type of place that Hirota dreaded the most. The exterior was elaborately plastered with red brick tiles, and while the first floor facing Dougenzaka was small, at its center was a small sprinkling water fountain where young people—who looked as though they were waiting for someone—were hanging out.

There were small shops facing the plaza, mostly boutiques, cafés and the like. He noticed that the people here, either sitting on the edge of the water fountain or standing by the side of it as they glanced at their wristwatches, were predominantly female.

Next to the fountain at a place further in, he could see the signboard of the café he was supposed to go to, but it appeared that he had to cross the plaza to get there.

Discouragement washed over him.

His family name was Hirota and his personal name was Seigi. His

father and his father's father were policemen who prided themselves in kendo, and if one traced down the lineage, his family were also kendo instructors. The father's occupation was tough, as well as the family's traditions. Because he was raised in such a family, Hirota was hopelessly lost when it comes to sophisticated places like this. He was wet behind the ears at a quarter of a century. If one never went to the disco at this age, then one had never been on something like a date. Once, he had gone to a formal marriage interview, but he had been politely declined by the other party. Somehow or another, it seemed that his neglect of public music and dancing had been the cause of defeat.

— Anyway.

Hirota was generally bad at places that young women liked and where they preferred to hang out. As he knew that he did not fit into such places, he could do nothing more than be uneasy. Would he be seen as nervous? Would he look completely out of the place? There had been many moments when women appeared to implicate meaningful looks at him, so he earnestly desired that if he could, he would never step a foot there.

Even now, the three young ladies who sat by the water fountain whispered amongst themselves, giggling every time they glanced into his direction. He felt himself becoming red 'til the ears as he walked halfway through the plaza indignantly, blushing because he felt embarrassed from being visibly nervous. There was no way he could escape now; he came here due to an appointment.

It was no good to compel his feet to make a little sprint, so Hirota urged himself to look down as he crossed the plaza. When he opened the door below a dolphin shaped board with the word 'Dolphin' written on it, a waitress raised her splendid voice.

"Welcome!"

While he greeted back, Hirota looked over the not so particularly wide store interior. At the corner, he found his colleague lightly holding up a hand.

"— Hirota-kun, here."

The soft piano tune resounding inside the shop wasn't exceedingly loud, so he could hear his colleague's small voice well. He nodded lightly and went towards the table in the corner.

Nakai Saki was Hirota's colleague, a co-worker who entered their office at the same time he did. From her, he had been told that her friend wanted to consult with him. The place of appointment had been designated yesterday, and especially on this free day, he had to be a place he was extremely bad at.

A girl with long hair sitting across the table from Saki turned and minutely bowed in his direction. She was quite pretty, also exuding a quiet atmosphere— because of this, Hirota was put at ease... somewhat. An energetic young woman was not exactly one of his strong points.

"I apologize for specially doing this," Saki said, pointing out his seat next to her. Hirota simply answered that he didn't mind, and sat down.

"— Midori, this is my colleague, Hirota-kun," Saki introduced her to him and looked into Hirota's direction. "This girl is Agawa Midori-san.

We were in the same seminar at university."

Hirota nodded with a hello and the girl lightly bowed her head once again. She gave him the impression of a very precise young woman, only, her complexion was rather poor. He wondered if she felt fatigued by troubles and wanted a consultation due to those matters.

After waiting for their orders to reach the table, they chatted about seasonal greetings, and then Saki lowered her voice.

"— So, about the things you wanted consultation on," Saki started, watching a tense Midori.

"I thought it was better to hear it from the person herself after all. — Midori, will you talk to Hirota-kun about your circumstances?"

After being told as such by Saki, she wavered a little. It wasn't about whether she should say it or not, it was just that she always hesitated to tell it to another person.

"... ... Actually... ... I moved houses this spring, but... ... that house seems to have a small problem."

Hirota inclined his head to the side in doubt.

"Do you mean problems like troubles with the neighbors or with the registration?"

“It’s not something like that... ...”

Midori lifted up her teacup absentmindedly. At the bottom of the empty cup, tea leaves formed a small, warped circle.

Chapter 1: Part 2

At first, what worried Midori after she moved into her new house was the many troubles with the electrical system.

The circuit breaker fell out at an unbelievable amount of instances. Appliances that hadn't failed until then broke down one by one, and no matter how many times they were repaired, the same defects occurred incessantly. Noise entered the telephone, the television's image contained distortions, and everything else stayed broken no matter how many times they dispatched the repairman.

Next was the water. During the rainy season, water entered and started to leak here and there inside the house. Even the repairman could not restore it. He said it's because the building wasn't made well. Even taking a single glance at the building would tell anyone as much. When they were told that it was due to the building's old age in the first place, neither Midori nor Reiko said anything in return. The brand new wall had become fully stained; moreover, the humidity was incredible, and it went without saying that the wall and the floor became dense with mould.

"... ..Wouldn't that pertain to being a problem with the building?" Hirota interrupted while listening to Midori's story, but Midori shook her head.

"That might be possible. The man who came to repair told me the same, but... .."

Hm. Hirota folded his arms. He looked back at Midori's eyes. They were filled to the brim with anxiety, long lashes framing them delicately.

"I think it was around from that time. It became very smelly."

"What do you mean by smelly?"

"It was a smell of something rotting. — At first I said, isn't it the smell of dead mouse? If it wasn't that, I wondered if it was the smell that came up from the sewage. Then with mother, I searched for the source of the smell, but we were not able to find where it was. Anyway, it was smelly in the whole house no matter where we went."

Midori faintly felt the smell rising to the tip of her nose and wrinkled her eyebrows.

Until around that time, Midori also thought, of course. *Of course* there was a problem with this building. That's why it was so cheap.

And then, whenever the rain stopped, she came to find it strange when her mother Reiko quickly closed the shutters during nights.

"— Mother, won't it be hot if you drew back the shutters?"

Midori had been watching the television's grainy projection in the living room. The heat had not been at a point where you would not hesitate between turning on the cooler or not, but it had been quite a hot night.

"Then you should turn on the cooler," Reiko said as she closed the shutters in a hurry.

"But that's wasteful."

"Isn't it fine though? I don't want to endure such a heat."

"The smell will get in the way. Stop it."

That made Midori's tone of voice somewhat tight, because the continuation of troubles inside the house irritated her chronically.

Reiko looked at Midori with worry in her eyes and silently closed the remaining shutters.

"Mother."

"I don't like it. Somehow... .."

"What do you mean with somehow?"

Reiko went as far as closing the curtains tightly shut.

"I feel like someone is watching us."

Midori looked at Reiko in confusion, her mother's expression vacant.

"Even if the windows are open a little, even if there is a little gap in the curtains... ..Somehow, I feel as if we're being observed from the outside. — That's why."

Midori's hands shook faintly. It was a feeling familiar to her as well. In a season like this, it was typical that she wanted to open the window if she could, but each time she opened the window at night, she felt as if she couldn't calm down, like someone was watching her. There was no doubt it was her imagination; she found herself unreasonably opening the windows here and there, but when she suddenly became aware of what she had been doing, she would close them wordlessly. She understood Reiko's actions.

"You're imagining it."

"That's what I thought, but... ..but I can't calm down you know," Reiko said and looked up with her clouded eyes. "Hey — Could it be that the neighbours are watching us?"

"Stop it, don't say such strange things."

But, Reiko began to say, though she closed her mouth. Midori grew restless. However, what if there was truly a possibility that they were being observed?

The ones who lived in the house to the left of theirs was a young couple, and she wondered whether they had a dual income, for it seemed that

they were away until late at night. To the right was a family of three people, a married couple with a son of about senior high school age. Midori wasn't quite fond of them. They were neighbours so they greeted each other when they would meet outside, but they were unusually sociable, and without any meaning, they would come to talk and ask about the mother and daughter's circumstances and about what goes on inside their house. It seemed as if they were being investigated. Every conversation they had never left her with any good sentiments.

"There's no way they would look at another person's house."

"... ..I wonder," Reiko said, seemingly unsatisfied. She reclined against the window for a while, hanging her head. A little time passed, and with a low voice, the words spilled. "I get the feeling that they came into our house... .."

"*Mother*," Midori said with a stern tone. "There's no way they can do such a thing. I don't think you're in the right mind."

"But the places of the things in the house keep changing."

"Aren't you just imagining it?"

"I am *not*. The place changes although it's trivial. I thought, was the house broken into by a burglar? And were there any lost things? Because of that, I tried to investigate often."

"I'm sure it's just a misunderstanding."

"You're wrong. There's certainly someone moving things around. — If you were here at that time, I would wonder whether it was you playing around. Though, it frequently happens while you're away. If someone hadn't come in, why did such things happen?"

"Are you sure it wasn't just a stray cat?"

"Can a *cat* change the position of a saucepan? While I went to pick up the laundry, a saucepan with cooked food moved on top of a different stove. Lifting up the hot saucepan, moving it, going so far as turning off the fire of the stove in use, and then turning on the stove's fire next to it? Something like that cannot be expected to happen if it isn't done by a human being."

Midori grimaced. — If that was true, it was obviously the action of a human being. Still, for what reason would someone do such things? If there was an intruder, that character surely would not want to leave behind traces of trespassing. If they didn't move something unintentionally or by accident, could this have been an act of flaunting?

"Is it really not mother's misunderstanding?"

"It's not. I felt uneasy, so now I'm watchful of the positions of the things. I am absolutely not imagining things." After saying that with a strong tone in her voice, Reiko sat by the window. "... ..It feels bad."

"That's why I think it's easy to suspect people."

"You're right. There was one time when Sasakura-san from next door

was adamant, even asking me if I would let her have a spare key for the house."

Midori blinked. "A spare key? For what reason?"

"That woman said, 'If you're out to do shopping and it's going to rain, you'd worry about your laundry, right? 'She's a little strange."

"People don't normally say that. And it's not like we're even close... ..."

"Right? The strange troubles keep going on and it feels like I'm being pestered by someone."

"If she wants a key that much, then there's no way she has one, right? Mother, don't you keep the key during daytime?" Midori said, biting her fingernails.

"I have it. It's even on a chain."

"If that's the case, people can't get in for sure, am I correct?"

"But I can't think of anything else!"

At some point while Midori and Reiko raised their voices, a small resounding sound abruptly interrupted them. The faint sound of ticking came from the direction of the dining room. Midori and Reiko exchanged glances and then the two peeked into the room.

Tick, tick. That was the sound of the glass being tapped. It seemed as if someone was knocking on the outside of the window in the dining room.

Midori took one breath and came closer to the window with the mirror. The knocking sound continued. Beyond the window was the wall outside the Sasakura house.

"— Hello?"

With a strange feeling gnawing her insides, Midori unfastened the lock of the window latch, and when she gently put her hands on the window, the sound suddenly stopped.

She opened the glass. Beside the sash, there was a screen door, and beyond that was an old looking outer wall. The gap that extended between the houses was dark.

"Hello?" Midori repeated as she looked out the window.

— There was neither a figure nor any shadow.

Chapter 1: Part 3

At the start of the rainy season when the summer set in, the troubles of the mother and daughter became worse

Regardless of whether it was day and night there was the sound of tapping on the window. When they opened the window after the sound of ticking against the glass occurred, no one was there. The window of the neighbouring house faced their side, but even if the window was not within an arm's reach, the knocking sound still happened.

The troubles continued as usual. Although they closed the shutter at an earlier time whenever possible, closed the window neatly and lived life by relying on the cooler, for the five times they could turn on the cooler there was also one time with trouble. What should have been cooling had become heating or it would stop without a cause. Even though they called someone to repair it again many times, the same failures occurred.

"... ..The hot water in the bath was deep red... .. " Midori heaved a sigh.

"Red water, is it?"

"Yes. We thought that perhaps the water had become mixed with rust from the water pipes. The house rattled... .. and again, even though we called a carpenter, he couldn't clear up the cause."

"... ..I see."

"On the other hand the sound of the television has become strange... ... No matter how many times we adjusted the channels, or corrected the antenna's position, strange patterns appeared and the colour became inconsistent. The telephone's crossed wires rapidly became bad, and at times we can't quite hear the voice of the other person."

Saki interrupted.

"In order to call me, Midori made a phone call from a public telephone. The jarring is so bad that a conversation isn't possible."

Midori nodded.

"That's true. -- To make matters worse, lately we've been receiving calls."

Hirota frowned.

"-- Due to the crossed wires?"

"I think so. When the telephone rings, we pick up the receiver, right? After doing that, the noise is terrible, moreover the voice of the other person is very distant. It appears just as if the telephone has crossed wires. -- Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"We can hear the voice and understand the voice's pitch, but we don't understand what they say. It appears that our voice cannot be heard and unfortunately the replies are completely different. It looks like the other person doesn't think it's suspicious, while we yell out sentences like I can't hear it, they seem to have given up and cut off the conversation. We have no idea who the conversation partner is, so we thought it wasn't meant for us."

Hirota knit his eyebrows.

"-- And then?"

"That is all. Those things continued and both of us seem to have developed a neurosis. Whenever we call up someone to repair, they make a detestable face. We have a reluctance of making an impossible request and even if if they finally come it soon will be broken again..."

As I thought, I've come to regret it, Midori sighed. If this was a rented house, then they would quickly leave. Midori and Reiko were already fed up with this. However, they couldn't do it easily like that.

"I see. That's what your troubles are."

At Hirota's voice Midori hesitated to say it a little, so she took a light breath once again, sighed and opened her mouth.

"... ... On top of that, mother became strange lately."

Midori supported her cheeks with her palms by putting both elbows on

the table. As it is she wanted to conceal her face.

"She told me that someone is watching from the window outside. That there is someone outside the window or something. There's no way there is someone is there. There is no space for a person to fit in, because it was from the second floor. She says it comes from the voice from the telephone's crossed wires."

Because Reiko complained about it very seriously Midori tried to strain her ears many times over, but she only understood the yelling about something and no matter what they were saying she couldn't comprehend it at all.

"She insisted that the water of the bathtub too was blood. Surely it was red, but it had a metallic smell, so it's natural that it would be rust. Even though I say that she says it's blood and wouldn't hear of anything else. ... Although there's a lot of resounding sounds from the neighbours, she says it's not from the neighbours, but that it is something inside our house."

"Something?"

Midori nodded.

"The footsteps of a person, voices and such that can be heard. Even if I say that these are resounding noises from the neighbours, mother keeps to her opinion that what we heard came from inside the house. There's no way what we're hearing comes from inside the house, right? Because apart from mother and I, nobody else lives in the house."

Without commenting on anything Hirota firmly stared at Midori's face.

"Such a thing can't happen, right?But," Midori covered her face with the palms of her hands. "... ..But, I also have heard things that seem to come from inside the house."

Saki, who had been quiet and listening, exhaled.

"And that's the reason you called me up at my place."

Hirota remained silent.

"I think this is completely abnormal. Wouldn't you think that the house is haunted by something? Furthermore, paralysis happened, the seeing of strange shadows, and so forth."

Hirota didn't look at Saki, but glanced towards Midori.

"Is it like that?"

Midori nodded a little.

"Mother says she has been paralysed many times."

"And Agawa-san?"

"I as well have... .. many times... .. But, it's something that happens

often... .."

Hirota nodded.

"Certainly, it's a frequent thing. -- And the shadows?"

Midori shook her head.

"I haven't seen it. But, mother told me she has the feeling of having seen something. Many times in the mirrors inside the house. Inside that mirrors a person is reflected. Because she hated it, the mirrors have been completely covered by a curtain.

Hey, Saki said, "Isn't it strange? Besides, among the previous people who lived there, there was one person who committed suicide."

"Is that so?"

When Hirota asked Midori, she nodded. When she had heard of it, she didn't know, but she heard it from Sasakura's wife next door that such a thing happened.

"I think there's definitely something there."

Hirota shortly glanced at Saki. After that he sighed once.

"-- Agawa-san."

Yes, Midori said as she raised her face.

"I don't think this is particularly strange."

Chapter 1: Part 4

Hirota stared at Midori. She seemed like a delicate young woman. She was frightened of all kinds of non-existing evil spirits of rivers and mountains, and he could no longer pity her white face that grew even more pale.

-- Of course, Hirota did not believe in things like ghosts and such. He thought that such things were illusions that displayed people's cowardice.

"Agawa-san had gotten hold of a terribly deficient building. Something like electrical appliances breaking down, I am certain it's because of a problem with the electrical system. Wouldn't the leaking of rain, and also the echoes of the voices from the neighbouring houses be because of a problem with the walls? You're frightened by thinking whether there something is there or not, so you see shadows inside the mirrors. -- Isn't it like that?"

Midori looked up at Hirota with teary eyes.

"We said the same to the electrician and the carpenter over and over again. But everyone repaired it properly and told me that this can't be the problem. Despite that the same things keep happening over and over?"

"The people who investigated it were probably bad. Have you tried changing the contractor?"

"No, I haven't gone that far... ... Where should I ask for that to get

simply over it, because I don't really understand it... ... But, what I want to ask is to introduce us to a real estate agent, so to speak I've been doing nothing but always doing maintenance to my house. Despite that the answer is always the same. They say that malfunctions just do not happen."

Hirota sighed.

"Sometimes, there are people who have bad luck with machines. Even the machines my friend bought broke down badly early on, whatever it may have been. Agawa-san, isn't it that your luck was bad as well?"

"... ...But."

"In this world incredibly strange things happen. However, that's not the fault of ghosts, curses and such. I think that blaming such things is, pardon me, foolish."

"Is that so... ..."

Midori muttered like that, but Saki was obviously not pleased.

"Hirota-kun, you did that quickly huh."

Hirota once again openly voiced his feelings of displeasure.

"It's true."

"Is it by chance that a problem is completely due to bad luck? So many troubles occurred in succession within such a short time, and moreover isn't it strange that even if you've repaired it over and over again, it didn't get fixed. Even the specialists said that it wasn't the case, right?"

"Those things are there as well. You may have a hunch that there is a deep meaning, but actually there's not something like a meaning to it."

Saki was always like this. She seemed to blame all sorts of things on the paranormal. Thanks to that the quarrels with Hirota never ceased.

Saki sighed lightly.

"... ..Oh, fine then. What Hirota-kun is saying is that it is because of an imagination."

"If you knew that, why did you call me out?"

"Right," Saki playfully smiled.

"Is there a meaning, is there no meaning? Aren't you in the mood to try confirm it at this opportunity?"

Hirota frowned.

"-- What do you mean?"

"First, Hirota-kun will stay overnight at Midori's house. Doesn't it feel bad or hopeless for Midori who is only with her mother to be in a strange house. If Hirota-kun stays over it would give Midori some relief, if by any chance something happens even Hirota-kun can perhaps have a valuable personal experience."

"Hey you... .."

"Or, are you scared?"

"There's now way I'm scared," Hirota said and looked at Midori. "Still, Agawa-san as well wouldn't want a man to enter their house of two women."

Saki looked at Midori. Midori seems to have become smaller and bent down.

"I'd... .. be glad to have you over, it would help. But... .. it's small," Midori said and tried to gauge Hirota's feelings from his expression. "My mother and I are anxious. If there is a person who is someone we can rely on, it would be truly helpful."

"See," Saki stared at Hirota.

"... ..Hirota-san, it must be troublesome to you, but... .."

"It doesn't matter to me in particular."

"Well, then it's decided."

Saki clapped her hands and stared at Hirota's face with a meaningful look.

"For a short while Hirota-kun will become Midori's free-loader for multiple purposes. -- On top of that, how about we let yet another specialist investigate this?"

"Specialist?"

When Hirota returned a question, Saki glanced at Hirota's eyes from her brows with a facial expression that had a hidden meaning.

"-- That is, Shibuya Psychic Research."

Hirota frowned. It was a name he had heard somewhere before.

"Hirota-kun told me that this kind of place existed," Saki secretly exchanged looks with him as she said this. With an expression that was confidential from Midori, Hirota remembered that name.

"Nakai --"

"We'll request them to investigate. -- How about it?"

"But, do you know where it is?"

Saki smiled.

"Of course, I know it," she said as she pointed to the ceiling with a finger.

"-- On the second floor."

Chapter 2: Part 1

When they went up on the escalator Hirota sighed of relief. They were in the open hall facing Dougenzaka. He went to the point of taking a breath at the white object in the centre of the wide space. The scary looking women were not there. The first floor's gallery and impression changed and had a somewhat peaceful appearance.

Three tenants faced the plaza. An interior design shop, an orthodontist and the office of a planning company that didn't make clear what kind of business it was. They could see a blue grey door in the back.

Hirota stopped his feet for a while and examined the establishment's appearance.

The door was a painted wooden frame and the upper half contained a glass pane that was frosted with a design of the office name and logo, which was written in metal with a stylish font.

-- It said, Shibuya Psychic Research.

They couldn't see a display of any business contents at all. Next to the door there was a big window, but just like the door it had a big glass pane that was frosted with a patterned design and framed in a blue grey frame. Since a roll screen hung down from the inside, they could not see what was behind it. They could just barely see the shadow of a decorative plant on the white cloth.

Hirota faltered a little. How does this look like a venerable office?

Speaking of venerable places, he reckoned it wasn't the place where you would invite out the family of an old and wrinkled woman who had died, fumigate evil spirits, recommend a memorial service for one's ancestor, ring out a purification skewer and a string of beads or to talk someone into buying hanging scrolls and pots at an outrageous price.

"Is it here?"

Did she feel similarly surprised? When Midori asked Saki, Saki shrugged and answered.

"Looks like it. -- I wonder if this translates to Shibuya Psychic Research office."

"It doesn't give off that kind of feeling at all, right."

"It looks like some kind of café. I wonder if this a recent fad? It's somewhat unexpected, huh?"

Saki stepped forward. Midori and Hirota followed after her. When she pushed open the door the light sound of a bell occurred.

"Good day."

A young man of approximately college student age greeted Hirota and the others who entered the office. His looks gave off a really bright-looking and good feeling. Even though he didn't wear a garment or suit,

the squarish clothing exuded a business feel. The somewhat intellectual feeling of the thin framed glasses would surely have felt unfitting if it had been the reception of a venerable place.

Hirota who had been getting worked up about an office of a venerable place, was quite dejected.

"Are you here for a consultation?"

His manner and his tone was crisp and again there was no atmosphere of a venerable place. For some reason with a disappointed feeling Hirota removed the strength of his shoulders.

Saki answered him instead of Midori.

"-- Indeed. Is your boss here?"

"That is," he said, expressing a worried looking smile. "Unfortunately our boss is on a trip. He was supposed to return today, but the air plane was delayed and so he is not here yet."

"Will he come in late?"

"No, I contacted the airport and the air plane seems to have arrived already, because of that I think he's probably on his way from Narita airport to here."

"Would it be better if we wait for him here? Or is it better to come

again?"

"If you're going to wait, an investigator will come very soon. However, we cannot say whether we'll take your request without consulting our boss, but for the time being you can tell us the matter and from then on we will contact you afterwards."

"Well then, we shall wait for him I suppose. -- Midori, Hirota-kun, are you okay with that?"

Midori and Hirota equally nodded. They were offered to sit on the sofa in the front.

A questionable atmosphere was nowhere to be seen in the office. The window seen at their left was big. Through the branches of the roadside trees in Dougenzaka a bright light came in from beyond the greenery. On an afternoon of a holiday the tumult of people going up the slope was transmitted from beyond the glass. The office's interior was elegant, but had a bright atmosphere, had no indecent props, and truly had the decency of something what would be called an office.

"I'm terribly sorry about the bad timing. -- Please have some tea."

The young man lined up black tea above the table.

"Thanks," Saki said. "-- Are you a part-time worker?"

"Yes indeed. -- Ah, my name is Yasuhara."

"The atmosphere doesn't feel much like a psychic phenomenon investigation office, huh."

"Yes, everyone says that."

"Does Yasuhara-kun also perform exorcisms and the like?"

"No, I'm just a clerk."

Saki looked out over the inside of the office. When entering through the door, one would immediately see one door at the left and two desks placed before the window facing the hall.

"So are the investigators are two people?"

"Yes," Yasuhara nodded.

"Do those people do exorcisms? Or is the one who does the exorcism the boss only?"

Yasuhara seemed to be a little worried.

"They also do such things, but... ... for the time being we are an investigation office, so rather than performing exorcisms, investigating cases and researching the cause is our business. If it is within our scope we will undertake it until there is a solution, so it is a little different from what is called a medium."

"So, they don't do exorcisms?"

Yasuhara appeared to become worried again.

"The investigators also do such things though."

"Both of them?"

"One and a half, I suppose?"

"Eh?"

Yasuhara smiled.

"When it comes to exorcism one person is still only a half."

"Oh I see," Saki smiled. "Have they returned, the full one? Or the half?"

"The half is. However, she will not go alone on actual investigations. There is certainly one more investigator and the boss accompanying her, also working together are the irregulars who are other people in the same business, so please be rest assured."

"By she, you mean a woman? And the full one, haven't they returned?"

"Aah. He was travelling together with the boss."

"An investigation?"

"No, private matters."

"You're a clerk? Are you the only one doing part-time work?"

"Yes. Sometimes a helper comes in, but she is a student preparing to take examinations, so basically it's only me."

"An exam student huh," Saki suggestively muttered at which Yasuhara inclined his head.

"Um... .. well."

"What is it?"

"For a while I had the feeling that you were investigating me."

Saki laughed.

"I couldn't help it because you're such a mysterious organization. -- Isn't that right?"

"Aah, you are quite right. -- Incidentally, is it fine if I ask you something?"

"Go ahead."

"Can you introduce yourselves to me?"

"Can't we not introduce ourselves?"

"No," Yasuhara waved his hand a little. "It's not like that at all. It's because making a request without an introduction is unusual."

"Aah, is it like that? -- I'm different. I only heard from hearsay that an office like this was here."

"Is that so?"

Just when Yasuhara said that, the sound of the door opening happened. At the same time an energetic young girl's voice leapt out.

"Good day."

It was a girl of senior high school age.

"Yasuhara-san, has Naru returned?"

After she said that her eyes stopped at Midori and the others. "Ah," the girl muttered and quickly bowed.

"E... .. Excuse me."

Yasuhara also said, "I'm sorry", and apologized to Saki and the others.

"Taniyama-san, these people want to make a request."

"Ah, yes. Excuse me, please wait just a minute."

The girl lowered her head, placed her bag on the desk in confusion, took her coat off and hanged it. Hirota opened his mouth dumbfounded and watched the girl attentively. After Saki was identically surprised, she faced Yasuhara and lowered her voice.

"You don't say... .. that girl is an investigator?"

"Yes. -- Don't worry. She may be young, but she carries out her responsibilities properly. Our boss isn't as easy going to the point of giving the title of investigator to incompetent people."

"Hm?"

Just as Saki murmured that, the girl returned.

"I'm sorry to have kept you waiting," she said while bowing, and said "Excuse me," before sitting in the sofa before them. On top of the table she placed a file.

"I'm investigator Taniyama Mai. Please let me hear out your request."

Chapter 2: Part 2

At Saki's urging, Midori talked to the girl about her circumstances.

Her monologue that she had kept to herself didn't seem dubious, but didn't seem very reliable either.

Midori was tired and completely fed up. Even though she was talking about her troubling circumstances to a party she couldn't rely on, she had willpower. Nevertheless she explained it carefully, because the girl who listened was earnest and her performance was moreover good. She was young to the point that she was shocked, but she certainly appeared to be experienced.

"The ones who live in that house are Agawa Midori-san and your mother Reiko-san. Only the two of you, am I correct?"

"... ..Yes."

"Are there people who frequently visit?"

"There are none," Midori said and then looked at Hirota as if she was just reminded of something. Hirota nodded.

"She's concerned, so I will be staying over from tomorrow on."

Hirota glanced at Saki. Strange gossip was not permissible, so in the

café they had arranged that he would be called her cousin.

The girl looked into Hirota's direction and lightly inclined her head.

"You are?"

"I am Hirota Seigi. Midori-san's cousin. Incidentally this is my colleague, Nakai Saki."

"I'm sorry, what is your age and occupation?"

"Twenty four. Government worker."

"Yes," Mai said as she took notes and closed the file.

"-- I'm sorry for taking up your time. We will consult this with our boss."

"Taniyama-san," Hirota said to Mai who had bowed her head. "What do you think? Would this be a psychic phenomenon after all?"

Psychic groupings that seem to blame just about everything in the world -- to the extent of forest shadows that were photographed and uneven film development on ghosts and the like was what Hirota despised completely. Now he wanted to know whether the girl before his eyes and those colleagues were of the same kind of people.

Mai inclined her head with not even a little care about her situation.

"As for me, I don't know... .. But it's strange no matter how I think about it."

"So it cannot be blamed on the building?"

"From what I heard I feel like it's a poltergeist. But we haven't been to the scene and done an investigation so I cannot judge."

"What is a poltergeist? I have heard of it many times."

"Uh... .. It means noisy spirit. There were knocking sounds, things were moving and noises happened, right? In the poltergeist phenomenon there are nine phenomena that occur a lot, and these are three from that."

"Then, you say there's something in the house after all?"

Mai inclined her head once more.

"I wonder.Recently poltergeists have been called RSPK... .."

"What?"

"Recurrent Spontaneous Psychokinesis, in short RSPK. It means PK that occurs repeatedly and spontaneously. PK is often called telekinesis

and is a type of psychic ability. In other words it's not the deed of a ghost, because there are many cases of people causing it. A person can do it unconsciously by accident. ... Only, in such cases there is certainly something that is called a focus point -- Um, there is a person who focuses on poltergeist damage or a person who is certainly related to the phenomena. In the case of Agawa-san's house it's not made clear, so I feel it's a little strange for a poltergeist."

"You're well informed, huh."

The one who said that with true admiration was Saki. Mai looked at Saki and waved her hand hastily.

"It's nothing. The boss told me this and it's because I've somewhat learned by observation under him."

"But, you're an investigator, right?"

"Yeah. In the meaning of engaging into investigative activities, I'm certainly an investigator. So hearing the story, transporting the investigation equipment, and such. Thanks to that I've developed a my physical strength completely."

Everyone laughed a little at her distinct lack of care.

"But, Taniyama-san. Is there also a possibility that it is not a psychic phenomenon?"

When Hirota asked her that, Mai made a serious face.

"I don't think there's nothing. For example, even at an investigation we did before there was a cause that wasn't psychic, but caused by a land subsidence."

"I see... .."

Hirota took a short breath. At least he felt that this girl had it put together better than he thought she would be.

Mai turned toward Midori again.

"-- Ah, um. In the case that we undertake your request, do you not mind if we establish a base where we put out our investigation equipment?"

"It's fine."

"I'm sorry, but in that case we'll be using a lot of electric power."

"I don't mind at all."

"In the case of a private residence, particularly when it comes to the connection to the power company could you please guarantee the source of electricity? Is that-"

"I'll do it."

"During the investigation we want to ask if it's possible to stay overnight to work."

"By all means. -- But it's cramped."

"Large equipment will be all over the place, regardless of where you go during day and night. To be clear, it will considerably get in the way."

Midori smiled a little.

"I don't mind at all."

"Then, the expenses of the investigation will become like this."

Mai held out the documents. Midori took it and looked it over. Earlier she heard from Saki about the market price, but when compared to that this was astonishingly cheap.

"I don't mind taking up the expenses, but... ... Is this honestly the right amount of money?"

"Yes. This office's foundation purpose is more or less the study of psychic phenomena, so we don't do investigation for the purpose of money. In the case of when we receive something out of gratitude, donations are received to aid research activities," Mai said and stuck a small tongue out. "In the past there have been cases where we got zero or something. We truly take it good feeling."

"Wow."

"Even though it's like that, the expenses are pretty big. After all consumable goods aren't trivial. The longer an investigation goes on, we could use up about five hundred with just video tapes alone. In the case of getting cooperation with people in the same business, that holds half of guarantee."

Midori nodded.

"It doesn't matter how long it takes. At any rate, I quickly want to clear up and solve the problem."

"I understand," the girl said. The sympathetic voice made her irritable mood become softer.

"I was wondering if you boss is going to undertake the investigation?"

Mai smiled with some worry.

"That's... .. how should I put it. Our boss has an unpredictable personality."

"Is he a difficult person?"

Mai gave her another bitter smile.

"Incredibly difficult. -- As long as we don't look into it, we cannot make promises to the clients."

"I see," Midori smiled a little. Setting aside whether she can rely on them or not, she did think that the girl makes people feel relaxed. Anyone who came here as a last resort like Midori, would be grateful to interact with such a girl.

"If possible I will try to persuade my boss to take your case."

"Please do."

"Yes."

When Mai nodded the noise of the door opening was heard once again.

Chapter 2: Part 3

"Welcome back."

Yasuhara was the one who left the desk close to the entrance and immediately greeted them, and Mai stood up from the sofa and adjusted her posture.

"Welcome back. -- Boss, this person wants to make a request."

They certainly seemed like difficult personalities, Hirota thought when he saw the two people who came in. It was immediately clear who was the boss and who was the investigator. The aloof-looking, extremely tall man (more than the average height, even taller than the tall Hirota, so he was fairly tall) naturally had to be the boss here. That was because the full investigator was apparently the boy of the same age as Mai. They wore callous squarish garments, so he guessed that was the office's style one way or another.

-- But he didn't appear to be much of full-fledged type either, Saki also thought when she looked at the boy who appeared to be the investigator. At a glance he was the unforgettable type. Would it be better if to say that he appeared to be an unblemished beauty? He also looked like too much like a doll, because he lacked a facial expression. The abundant contrast of his black appearance and his white skin gave such an impression. Both shortly glanced in the direction of Hirota and the others, but it was the boy who opened his mouth. While taking off his coat, he spoke with a very unkind voice.

-- The written request."

"I've taken it."

"Put that in line. I'll contact them at a later date."

"But the person herself is here."

At this he answered in a fed-up voice.

"I'm tired."

Mai twitched her eyebrows into a frown and then looked at Hirota and the others.

"Excuse me for a moment."

When they thought she was going to bow her head, she briskly walked into the direction of the two people while holding the file.

"I'm sorry for asking, but how many hours were you on the air plane? 24 hours? 48 hours?"

The two looked back at a dubious Mai. Hirota and others as well once again looked blankly at the firmly standing girl.

"My my, you must be tired from the long trip of course. -- But, Agawa-

san has been living in a stressful condition for how many months more than being on board of an air plane. At least read the request directly at this place, boss."

Mai, whose gentle state had vanished until a while ago, roughly thrust the file into the boy's direction. Hirota and the others were all three flabbergasted. -- The boss? Him?

Mai didn't care about being scolded coldly and pushed the file on him.

"Or, if you are that tired, shall I read it for you? If so, I can explain the request to you while you are taking a rest," Mai said and sweetly smiled. "How about having Yasuhara-san read it aloud for you, while I give you a shoulder massage?"

The boy, who was called the boss, sighed. Disappointed he took the file from her.

"-- Tea."

"Yes~"

"I'm sorry for that. -- I am the boss, Shibuya," he said, sat down on the sofa and opened the file. Before the eyes of Hirota and the others, whose jaws had dropped, he began turning the pages of the file.

-- Say what you like, but this is far too young.

Hirota was flabbergasted and felt even more angry.

"You're the boss? -- Is that true?"

The reply was blunt and moreover it depressed him.

"Indeed."

"You said you're -- Shibuya?"

"Is the name important?"

He didn't let his eye depart from the file.

"How old are you? You look extremely young."

"If you are dissatisfied with my age, I can reject this request."

"What's your work history?"

"Hirota-kun," Saki rebuked him with a low voice.

He finally gazed at Hirota. Hirota was born as a man, so he wasn't mindful about a man's personal appearance. However, the intense lack of expression that resembled a doll rubbed his nerves the wrong way.

"The same goes for my career. If you're curious about my age and

history, then visit another place. Moreover, you don't seem to be the client Agawa Midori-san."

Hirota suppressed his boiling anger to the best of his ability. He didn't want to fall apart just like a childish person in front of this youngster.

"I'm the one who invited her here. I'd be sorry if there were a strange company."

"Then, how about searching for another organization so you can be more at peace. I don't think it's a very kind thing to introduce someone without confirming beforehand whether it is a place you can trust."

Hirota felt the pressure of his anger rising again. It was inevitable that he would put up with raising his voice.

"That's why I am confirming it right now."

After looking at Hirota without interest, he returned his gaze to the file and spoke with an emotionless voice.

"Then, Agawa-san. Are you going to withdraw your request?"

Midori shook her head.

"-- No. Please help me."

Having become completely ignored, Hirota's mind had not calmed. -- How conceited, his eyes glared, showing his anger. Saki who sat next to him poked him very lightly with her elbow and told him to calm down, but unfortunately it didn't work on Hirota's reasoning.

"If I'm not mistaken, -- I heard that the owner of this place is a foreigner."

He looked at Hirota. Although he had exposed the cards in his hands at last, the anticipated change of facial expression could absolutely not be seen.

"Is it important to know the nationality of the person in charge?"

"You don't look like a foreigner? I wanted to introduce her to the boss. He isn't a part-time working kid named Shibuya, the real person in charge is Oliver Davis."

That facial expression didn't change. Rather, it were Mai and Yasuhara who made surprised faces.

Hirota smiled.

"Why don't you call out Davis-shi?"

He closed the file. Still, any kind of facial expression was not in sight.

"-- Agawa-san. It seems that your cousin is dissatisfied with this place.

How about consulting him once you go home today?"

Midori worriedly looked from him to Hirota.

"The one who requested this is me. May I ask you something?"

"Please go ahead."

"Are you the person in charge?"

"Indeed."

Midori nodded at the concise reply.

"Then, I'll be in your care."

"... .. Midori-san."

Midori looked back at Hirota who had spoken up.

"Hirota-san may not understand, but mother and I can not take it any more. If I want to receive help, I'm willing to rely on anyone."

"But."

"At the very least I've come to like this place. So please, let me do what

I want."

At Midori's unexpectedly firm attitude, Hirota reluctantly nodded.

"... .. I understand."

Chapter 2: Part 4

"Well then," he said, while looking at the file, and began to interview Midori.

"Your father passed away one and a half year ago, -- are there plans for your mother's re-marriage?"

Midori widened her eyes.

"There are none."

"Midori-san, are you seeing someone?"

"No, but... ... Is this really necessary?"

"I'm asking this, because it's essential. -- What is the cause of your father's death?"

"An accident with a car."

"At the time you purchased the house, who was the one who resisted, Midori-san or your mother?"

"Mother was pleased with it. I was curious about the bad lighting, but I didn't think I would dare to oppose her to that degree."

He merely nodded.

"Are there speakers near the television?"

"There are."

"Around what time were they manufactured? What are the sizes?"

"They were bought two years ago. The size is like a very thick dictionary."

"Is the antenna line a coaxial cable?"

"I think so."

"Is there one telephone line? Or has the telephone line been extended?"

"There is one. The telephone instrument is also one, but we also have an additional cordless phone."

"With the main telephone and the additional phone, are there alterations in the crossed wires situation?"

"It's more bad with the additional phone."

He nodded and made checks in the memo.

-- This boy was also skilled, Midori thought.

"Have there been instances of closed doors opening on their own, or on the other hand, open doors closing on their own?"

"I feel that those kind of things have happened many times."

"Have there been times when there were things from drawers or cases you didn't remember leaving there?"

"I don't think so."

"Have you met the previous owner?"

"We met him only once."

"His new address is?"

"I don't know. If you ask the real estate agent, you may know."

"Have you heard about rumours about any events or accidents surroundings concerning the house?"

"... .. I've heard some talk that one of the previous residents committed suicide."

Midori thought it was as if she was taking a medical diagnosis. While he was asking small questions he wrote on his memo in a Western language, that all the more made her associate that with clinical records.

"Have you taken you mother to a neurologist or a therapist?"

"... ... No way, I haven't!"

He nodded seemingly be pleased with something, and closed the file.

"-- Understood."

"Will you be taking my request?"

He appeared to think for a while.

"There is some possibility that this couldn't be a psychic phenomenon. Even so do you mind it?"

"What do you mean by it's not a psychic phenomenon?"

"At one glance, it seems like a poltergeist, but that leaves questions. Regarding the frequent trouble with the electrical system at your house, from what I've heard of the symptoms there seems to be a physical explanation, but we haven't investigated this in detail, so I can't confirm it.

"Please investigate it."

"In that case, do you mind if we do a preliminary investigation and proceed further from its results?"

"No," Midori shook her head. "My very anxious mother worries me. Please investigate thoroughly."

He nodded.

"Then, we will take the case. -- Lin."

After he talked to the tall man, who sat in the back and took the memo, he looked back at Midori.

"Please hear from the investigator for the detailed arrangements."

Chapter 2: Part 5

"... .. Do you really trust that company?" Hirota unhappily asked, while going down to Dougenzaka.

"That's my intention. I'm sorry for making you worry, but I cannot hope to search for another."

"But what if you find another one. A more dependable place."

Midori shook her head.

"I am not knowledgeable about such things. I don't know what kind of medium I can confide in or not. If I may say so, it's because it would seem like a gamble where I'd ask for help. I wish to be helped by them."

"But," Hirota argued.

Midori smiled at him.

"I thought that a medium would have a more mysterious mood. I wonder if they are eccentric people? Both the part time worker and the investigating girl were very ordinary and they made a good impression. I can feel it's like a detective agency. Both kids had the right manners, are reliable and I thought wouldn't they be good? But everyone is quite young."

"But, I thought they were still quite suspicious looking. I think he isn't the boss either."

"You said that the person in charge wasn't him, right?"

"Because the person in charge over there is a foreigner."

"A foreigner isn't restricted to blonde hair with blue eyes and talking broken Japanese. In our company there are employees who come from foreign branch offices, but it's not like they all appear like foreigners."

"But, he said he was Shibuya."

"Isn't that his Japanese name? He was taking notes in English."

"That was in English?"

Hirota also saw that he had been writing down something, but from where he was sitting he couldn't see the handwriting.

"Yes. -- I think it's possible that he's registered as a foreigner."

"No way... ..."

"Anyway, we'll know once the investigation starts whether we can depend on them."

Hirota sighed.

-- I see. It would be good if you won't regret it."

"If there is regret, it would be after buying the house to the point of dying, having something like regret on top of this, I don't want to go there. It's painful."

Saki picked up the telephone. From the opposite side of the platform the train that carried Midori just departed. Her companion stood in front of the shape of the departing train.

-- Ah, Kurahashi-san? It's Nakai," Saki said and looked for some reason at her surroundings. Hirota, who stood at the side, saw the train off and looked serious.

"I have arranged the request. It seems like we'll enter the investigation soon."

From the other side of the telephone, a blunt voice returned a, I see.

"As I thought, the investigation scene seemed suitable, but with only that hot headed Hirota-kun it's dangerous."

Hirota turned his head to Saki, but he frowned when Saki made a non-serious face at this. The person on the other end of the phone, only made a half-hearted reply regarding that.

"Only, the owner is not Davis, he calls himself Shibuya. A boy of senior high school age. Because of that can you check the data whether it's not a mistake?"

I see, was the only reply. Saki cut off the telephone without a care.

"Is it fine? Dragging your friend into this?"

Hirota's voice sounded disappointed.

"That her disadvantage has become like this, I don't think it is. If the company is for real, she will be helped for sure and if they're a sham, it's good for me and Hirota-kun. It hasn't become especially inconvenient, right?"

The train arrived at the platform. Saki grimaced at the headlights that just entered her eyes.

"Besides, you're the one who is so fussed about him, right? Be grateful for giving you the chance to investigate it."

Hirota again became disappointed.

"... .. I will catch a tail for sure."

Hirota's murmuring voice was erased by the sound of the bell, the noise and the boisterous throngs, so it didn't reach Saki's ears.

Chapter 3: Part 1

"I'm glad to see you."

Midori opened the door, and showed the visitors in.

The ones who were planned to come were three people, the young boss and his investigators, the girl and the young man. A grey wagon that was driven from the gate and into the garden, was parked.

Reiko, who was standing beside a smiling Midori, bowed her head while absent-mindedly thinking, this is useless.

She had heard it in advance, but they were truly young. What could these two children and one young man possibly do?

-- *Leave*, Reiko complained within her thoughts.

Don't get into the entranceway. Turn around right there and leave this house. Don't ever come again.

Even though she strongly thought in a manner like that, it was extremely troublesome to get it to leave her mouth.

-- Ah, they weren't going to pass over a house like this.

Reiko absent-mindedly gazed at the three who entered her house. Their

girl sweetly smiled and bowed her head, but she could not bring herself to smile back.

--- Please leave and don't come back.

The girl looked puzzled, then she was called by Midori who faced towards the inside of the corridor and slipped past Reiko's side in small steps.

Midori guided the trio to a four and a half tatami mat sized Japanese-style room at the center of the first floor.

"I wonder if this is passable."

The young boss nodded without an expression at Midori who asked that.

Size, he simply said to the short young female investigator and left the room. The girl took out the measuring tape. While she roughly measured the size of the room, she could hear her mutter, "I wonder if this is okay."

"Is this place too narrow?" Midori asked.

Mai smiled and turned her head.

"It's fine. We'll work it out somehow."

"With that much equipment?"

"Well, I'm already fed up with that."

After laughing, Mai lowered her voice a little.

"... ..Your mother looks quite worn out."

She wondered if it could be called a worn out facial expression. What Mai had seen was the kind of facial expression that was completely exhausted and had become fully lethargic.

"Is that so," Midori bitterly smiled. "I'm sorry, for her lack of courtesy."

"Please don't worry about that."

"Recently, she's always like that. She's absent-minded and hardly speaks anymore."

"She must be really tired," Mai's voice seemed to be compassionate from the bottom of her heart.

"It's the age, right. -- Is there something I can help with?"

"No way. Please rest because you have a day off from work. Midori-san must be tired too, right? How terrible."

"I'm not like that though."

"You have to be tired, don't rely on something like a normal medium or a suspicious company," Mai looked blankly, then laughed. "Don't we particularly seem like a suspicious group?"

"I didn't see you like that though?"

"You're so big-hearted, Midori-san. Normally, don't that kind of boss and that kind of investigator want to make you run away?"

Midori softly smiled.

"Certainly, the average age seems low though. --- I'm sorry for the impoliteness of the person I took with me recently."

"Oh no," Mai waved her hand. "The impolite one was on our side. Our boss doesn't differentiate between between courtesy and superficial courtesy. Your cousin Hirota-san, right? Didn't he seem pretty angry?"

"Well, " Midori bitterly smiled. "But, the one who requested was me."

"If you had come to request earlier, Hirota-san wouldn't have been angered to shreds."

"Really?"

"Until he returned, there had been a representative of the boss due to his absence. If it had been her, the manners would have been good and things like quarrelling wouldn't have happened."

Midori inclined her head.

"Is that person Davis-san? -- No, I'm wrong. Oliver is a men's name."

"That," Mai pointed a finger. "Where did you hear that name?"

"Uh," Midori looked back at Mai.

Mai lowered her voice even more.

"Well, that is certainly our boss' name. Ah, despite his looks he's not a Japanese person."

"Is he half-Japanese?"

"I don't know that much. Because the boss doesn't tell us such private things."

"Huh?"

"Actually the fact that his real name is written in Latin letters was something I didn't know for a long time. Officially and personally he never introduces himself with his real name. He goes by Shibuya

Kazuya."

"His Japanese name?"

Mai shrugged.

"Something like that. For the time being this is a secret."

"I'll keep it confidential."

"I'm sorry. -- My colleague Yasuhara-san thought it was strange for that name to have leaked, as a matter of fact."

Midori inclined her head.

"That was something Hirota-san told me. I wonder why he knew something like that.I'll ask him next time."

"No, it's not like I want you to investigate it in particular."

"Really? -- Speaking of which, how should I call the other investigator by their name?"

The other day at the office at the end she hadn't asked for his name. The person himself didn't give his own name, and in any case he seemed like the unsociable type who only said the essential details.

"Ah, Lin-san? His name is Lin Koujo. -- Lin-san is also a foreign person, by the way," After she said that, Mai smiled a little. "-- Hey, isn't he suspicious looking?"

Midori laughed.

"He's okay."

"Midori-san, you really are generous, huh. Usually, by only looking at that interaction with Naru, one would be ready to run away though."

-- Naru? The boss?"

"Ah," Mai said and stuck out a small tongue. "Eh, I guess."

"A nickname?"

"Yes.but this is something between us."

"Yes?"

"It means Naru-chan, the Narcissist."

Midori laughed.

"Certainly he does look beautiful. The first time I saw him I was so surprised."

"Then after that, everyone gets surprised by his badness of his personality."

"Is that so?"

"Well, his pride is high, he dislikes losing and his ego is strong. He thinks of himself as having the best looking face, being the smartest and the greatest in the world. He also doesn't think of people as people and he's fussy."

"Huh?"

Just when Midori said that, a strict voice jumped out from behind her. It was the voice of the gossiped person.

"-- Mai! Why are you slacking off!"

After grimacing, Mai smiled.

"See? Isn't he fussy?"

Chapter 3: Part 2

Midori stood in the corridor before the room for a moment, and stared dumbfoundedly at the strange condition the inside of the room she was peering at had attained.

A rack made of steel was assembled with television-like things of various sizes were crowded in there, and the floor was covered by various cords.

After connecting and checking the transported equipment with the memo, Mai carried a clipboard and came to the corridor.

"Excuse me, Midori-san."

Mai watched and smiled at Midori who was gaping.

"I'm doing a preliminary investigation. Can you show me around the house, please?"

"Yes. -- From where?"

For some reason Midori turned her head to the back, while her feet faced the living room. Inside the room separated by sliding screens, there was no place for her feet to stand due to the equipment that was set up on the floor. The two leftovers she leaned over was joined by a type of cord.

"... ..Are all of these equipment?" Midori softly asked Mai.

"Yes. Were you surprised?"

"A little. -- I wonder if it would have been better if it was a wider room."

"Don't worry about it. It's fine, because there aren't that many camera's."

"Is that so --?"

"Yes. By the way, your cousin? He is living here now, right?" Mai asked, and Midori bitterly smiled.

"He's at work. Saki said that she would come check, so I think they'll come together," Midori said and opened the door of the living room.

"-- Here is the living room."

Mai looked out over the room and left a small machine, which she took out of her pocket, on top of the shelf. Then she took out the measuring tape.

"I wonder if it's okay to asked what you are doing?"

While applying the measuring lint to the wall, Mai answered without care, "Uh, I'm measuring the room's temperature and its size, because

there is no blueprint of the house."

Midori remembered that the investigator Lin had told her, if there is a blueprint of the building's construction, I would like to have it. Unfortunately there was no such thing as a blueprint. There was no such thing inside the official papers that were handed over to her from the real estate agent either.

"We can't have no blueprint made."

She thought it was different from medium's way of doing things, but somehow she could understand it. Nevertheless, to Midori it was somewhat unexpected that they needed something like temperature.

"Does the temperature also have a relation to the investigation?"

"In places where spiritual phenomena occur, the temperature often drops. -- Simply put, this is just the planning of making an index of which rooms we will mainly investigate."

"Huh.This is perhaps rude of me if I said it like this, but this feels kind of strange, right?"

Mai smiled while she wrote down the wall's measurements on the board.

"Everyone says that."

"Is all that much equipment necessary?"

"It's for the investigation. But even if I say it like that, it's only accurate for half of it."

"What do you mean?"

Mai worriedly cocked her head.

"Well, in short. In our case, we also do something that is called exorcism, but our first goal is to investigate spiritual phenomena. One half of the equipment checks what is happening here and for reasons of collecting data for things like exorcisms, but the other half is, how do I say it? Equipment that is purely used for investigation. We try to investigate with all kinds of equipment, we research what ghosts are, that's how it seems in simple terms.

"Seems?"

When Midori returned a question, Mai put out a small tongue.

"Because I'm a good-for-nothing. To tell the truth, I don't understand those complicated things in that field. Even now I honestly don't know what half of that equipment is supposed to do."

"Is that so?" Midori broke into laughter. "So, you haven't done an exorcism yet?"

Mai showed a mischievous face.

"Before an exorcism, there's a long road that makes me feel fed up. I'm sorry for being a blockhead."

"No no," Midori muttered and looked over the living room. Midori has spent a lot of time here. It was because this room was the only one with a window where one could see the outside. In contrast, Reiko disliked being in the living room. It seemed that she felt that she was being watched from the outside.

"Hey, Taniyama-san?"

"Yes?"

From her brow Midori watched the girl's face raise up to look at her..

"Taniyama-san, you can also do exorcisms right? You're what would be called a psychic, right?"

"I wonder about that," Mai ambiguously answered. She had an expression that could be taken for both yes and no.

"Am I wrong?"

"Because I'm still a half share."

"... .. But, a half is still different from an ordinary person, am I wrong?"

"Well, I wonder."

"Is there something in this house after all? Does it have any strange points? A half is fine, so won't you let me hear it?"

Mai made a worried face.

"My boss is strict and scolds me when I say careless things."

"For me, that's what is currently troubling me the most. If it's a trouble that is harmless, and doesn't go beyond that, but if it's not the case, then I want to be prepared," Midori said and Mai was a little perplexed.

"Is my individual impression fine? As for me, I'm just really a half and I don't live up to expectations at all."

"It's fine."

Mai took a glimpse in the direction of the door to the living room.

"When I entered the house, I somewhat had a strange feeling."

"Strange... .. feeling?"

"Whether there is any meaning to it, I don't know though. When I got

in from the entrance way, I had an extremely uneasy feeling.
Somehow, it felt as if there wasn't anyone at all in this house."

Midori raised her eyebrows.

"Midori-san was right in front of me, and although you received us and even though your mother was there in the entranceway, for some kind of reason I had such a feeling. It felt as if I had gotten into a house where there was no one around. There were no people that I expected to be there and that gave me a feeling that made me extremely anxious," Mai awkwardly laughed. "I wonder why there wouldn't be anyone around. -- Strange, right? Even though Midori-san and your mother were right in front of me.That was a strange impression, so perhaps... .. was what I thought."

"Perhaps, there might be something here... ..?"

Mai nodded and then bitterly smiled.

"But I don't live up to expectations at all. The house is dark and it might be a bit insignificant."

After saying that Mai seemed to be worried.

"Perhaps, because your mother had a somewhat gloomy face, I may have gotten a bit anxious."

Midori breathed in. Remembering Reiko's complexion, naturally made her heave a sigh.

"... .. That's right."

Mai said sympathetically, "Um... .. I'll do my best."

Midori smiled at the worried looking girl.

"Thank you."

Chapter 3: Part 3

"I'm back."

As soon as Mai entered the room, an unparalleled cruel voice leapt at her.

"You're late. -- The results?"

The equipment inside the room had already begun operating. After Mai affirmed that with a glance, she looked at the board.

"There were no rooms that have particularly low temperatures, boss," she said and held out the board. "There really are no window here in this house. The humidity is also incredible. Because of that I took the opportunity to measure the lighting and humidity."

In the direction of where he received the board, he watched Mai, and without an expression he took it away and said, "While I wasn't looking, you seem to have become shrewder than a monkey."

"Hey."

The nationality of this boss was British. He returned to his own country for a while due to private reasons, but during that time she had studied under the representative head who managed the office. Even though she felt that she had progressed a little, he made this remark. Though there was no way she thought that she was ever going to be praised.

"Stop comparing people to their ancestors. While you're at it, please stop turning a blind eye to your own negligence and calling your subordinates useless, boss."

"If I made an effort, would Mai's IQ go up?"

Mai glared at her superior's lack of expression.

"Hey. Naru, it seemed like you didn't want to go any trouble and didn't explain anything. So for how long was I supposed to just remember that work? If you explained it to me one by one, even I can become effective at something this much."

He shortly glanced at her and expressed a cynical smile on his well-shaped mouth.

"By the way, weren't you in the mood to measure the inclination of the floor?"

"Uh," Mai halted. There were strange sounds inside the house, so she thought the house was crooked and therefore needed to be checked on whether there were extreme slopes in the floor and walls. That's what she just remembered.

"... .. I'm sorry."

Even though she meekly apologized, the opposing reply was blunt.

"Naturally, I didn't expected Mai to go that far."

Mai glared at her superior's unruffled face.

"You, you still have a grudge against me huh. because I made you work so shortly after you got back from your country."

"No, not in particular. From London to Narita is 16 hours at most. -- But on the way we were made to wait for just 10 hours in Moscow."

"... .. My bad."

In her own mind Mai stuck her tongue out and went to sit on top of the tatami mat that faced him. The video cameras were already set up and lined up against the wall.

"-- And? What's our investigation plan after this?"

"Right," Naru silently passed the clipboard he had received from Mai to Lin who was operating the computer. He carried out the input of data.

"-- At any rate, let's watch the situation on the first day. The circumstances don't seem to be urgent yet."

"As I thought, a poltergeist?"

"Who knows. Let's try a suggestion experiment this evening for that. After that we'll hear about the situation from Mrs. Agawa and Hirota-shi. For the time being that's all I suppose."

Mai leaned her body a little forward.

"Have you noticed the state of the mother?"

"She looked quite down."

"I wonder if she's all right... .."

Somewhere she couldn't help thinking about that face that gave a blank impression. She had the air of having used up all of her energy and willpower. If she was tired to that degree, it was necessary for early help on the first day, and if she made such a face for a different reason, then the help was even more necessary.

"Hey, Naru? If it was RSPK, could that be the reason the offender gets unusually tired?"

"Usually they would."

"As I thought, to cause a poltergeist, you use physical strength. But it might be a problem of willpower."

"Idiot. It's the opposite."

"Ah?"

"With RSPK the damage is often concentrated on the offender. Because they become the biggest sufferer, it would be extremely exhausting."

"I see. Then, causing a poltergeist by itself particularly, doesn't make you tired."

"There's also the theory that RSPK happens because there is a surplus of energy. There are many cases where the person self is not self-conscious of such meanings."

"Hm," Mai muttered and once again looked at the face of her young superior. "The users of RSPK are children in their puberty or women, right? -- Therefore, is there also a possibility that Midori or her mother are causing it?"

"We can't rule it out. Even so it bothers me how neither of them are the focus."

"In the case of an adult woman, it's a person who is sensitive to spirits. One way or another it seems to be the mother who is spiritually sensitive."

Naru cynically smiled.

"Before you connect the outward appearance and the presence of spiritual sensitivity, isn't it better to take a look at the mirror?"

"Thanks for the abundant help. In any case, I seem to have a carefree face."

"Besides, to speak of woman who has spiritual sensitivity isn't necessarily correct. Accurately, one should say that a woman is accused of having spiritual sensitivity. For a woman who has a tendency for hysteria, there are types who want to think they themselves have spiritual sensitivity. This type of woman strongly craves the limelight, is constantly unnoticed by their surroundings and falls into frustration. When the restrained energy is expressed in the shape of RSPK, naturally the focus is turned to oneself for the sake of collecting the attention of the surroundings."

"Huh... .. But, Midori and her mother don't seem very much like that type." Mai said, seeking agreement from her companion.

However, with a low voice he declared, "With just a first impression, you wouldn't know."

Chapter 3: Part 4

The doorbell rang when the members of Shibuya Psychic Research were adjusting the equipment that they had placed in the living room. The absent-minded Reiko, who sat in the dining room, didn't respond to the doorbell. Midori, who frowned went to the entranceway after frowning at her mother's state, took Saki and Hirota with her as she came back.

"I'm sorry for intruding," Saki raised her cheerful voice, but Hirota on the other hand expressed a rigid colour on his face.

"Anyway, I'm going to pour tea. Please take a break, Shibuya-san and the others," Midori said, and went to the dining room. Hirota stared at Mai and the others with the usual suspicious-looking facial expression

Good grief, Mai sighed inwardly. They were used to such facial expressions. Even though an occupation such as psychic research is suspicious in itself, with two out of three of those members not of age, they couldn't even complain if they were watched with suspicious eyes to put it more or less bluntly.

When they wearily continued the investigation, a disgusted Hirota raised his voice abruptly.

"-- Shibuya-kun or whoever you are. Is your real name Davis?"

No reply came from behind Mai. Discerning that he had decided on proudly ignoring the man, Mai sighed lightly. Reluctantly, she turned to

face Hirota.

"Um. Excuse me, but where did you hear that name from?"

"That probably doesn't matter."

It seemed like Hirota's voice could explode at any moment.

"Why is there a need to lie about your name? A human lies in order to hide bad circumstances. If it's inconvenient to let people know something, doesn't that mean that there are underhanded reasons?"

"Do inconvenient things all consist bad things?"

Hirota laughed. It was obvious what he was actually thinking about even if he didn't reply. Mai sighed and returned to glance at her hands. There was no point in quarrelling with this kind of person.

"Taking advantage of the weakness of a troubled person who is caught by a bad construction, and do business full of lies. That's what you guys are. Saying lies such as 'it's a ghost', 'it's a psychic power', are charming, but I can't tolerate sneaky methods that take advantage of people's misfortune."

"-- Hirota-san!"

The one who stopped Hirota's speech was Midori who had returned with a tray. Hirota looked at Midori.

"Don't you understand that you're being deceived, Agawa-san? These guys seem like a company that viciously extort from people's misfortune. A company like this won't help you. You're only asking for more problems."

"I was the one who made the request." Midori's voice clearly stated. "I'm grateful that Hirota-san is worrying over me, but won't you let me do as I please?"

"Do you know how many people out there who were ruined by clinging to companies like these, even though it would be have been good to rely on a doctor or a lawyer? In your case you're dragging a company like this into your own house at your own whims. For believing foolish stuff such as ghosts."

"Even then, it's not because I believe without question. How should I say it, I only requested for an investigation."

"That's the first step towards a difficult situation. There's no such thing like ghosts. If there is something happening in this house, it's because of the building. The place that Agawa-san should be running to is the lawyer."

"-- What can a lawyer do?"

The voice that said that wasn't Midori's voice. Everyone searched for the owner of the voice at that moment and found Reiko standing in front of the glass door that continued to the dining room.

Reiko dimly looked at the inside of the living room. They could not sense any strength in her voice or any willpower in her facial expression.

"Lawyers, police. What can those people do? It's not as if they can stop the things that have happened. They cannot revive a dead person."

"Um... .. Agawa-san."

Hirota's voice was somewhat confused and both Midori and Saki watched Reiko with uneasy looking expressions.

"Because danger is not to be approached. You cannot be here. So please, get out. Go out quickly, don't ever come back again," Reiko said with a voice that had no intonation. Rather than saying something that she should say, it felt as if a battery had been taken out.

"... ..Mother."

Midori gently placed a hand on Reiko's shoulder.

"Let's take a rest for a while? You must be tired, because a lot of people have come."

When Midori pushed Reiko towards the dining room, Reiko obeyed without resistance. In the living room, the people who similarly frowned were left behind.

Chapter 3: Part 5

"... ..I wonder if they're all right... .." Mai softly whispered, facing the intercom.

"What is?" She heard the blunt voice from the headphone. The jarring was terrible.

"Midori's mother. What happened just now, isn't that dangerous?"

"I wonder about that. -- Mai, you're going too quick."

"Insensitive person," Mai whispered and before her eyes she saw a camera that was placed in the hall of the second floor.

There was a moveable arm on top of a tripod and a video camera was set up on that. The camera chased after Mai's right hand as if it were a pair of human eyes. A small pouch dangled from her moving right hand. The pouch contained a mix of dry ice fragments and round bearings. In the corner of the room a thermographer was established near the ceiling that was linked to this camera and now was chasing the place with the lowest temperature -- the pouch that Mai's right hand was holding.

As she moved her arm very slowly, Mai whispered in the intercom.

"I wonder if it's a neurosis... .."

"Ignorant people shouldn't use such words so easily. -- The check is over. You can come back."

"You're calling me ignorant?"

"Still, do you know what the symptoms are of a neurosis?"

Mai scowled, but to be honest she could not refute it.

"Wasn't it abnormal just now?"

"Are you talking about the equipment? Or the current circumstances?"

"Either."

At this he bluntly replied, "None."

She went downstairs and passed in front of the door of the living room. The door had several small glass panels, so she could see that two or three people had gathered and were busy talking about something. Because Hirota seemed to be talking about something in a stern voice, it seemed that he was probably persuading Midori once again.

"Hey, Naru? Why does Hirota-san know your name?"

"Don't ask me."

While she cowered her head, Mai stopped her feet in the corridor. In the front there was a large full-length mirror and there her own figure was reflected.

"But it looks like you were exposed somewhere, isn't it?"

"Who know. -- I'm just keeping quiet about it. It's not like I'm hiding it, so I guess it was leaked from somewhere."

"You are hiding it though."

While she said that and opened the sliding screen, the person himself looked over his shoulders to Mai.

"I just think that it's better if it's taken care of without letting people know."

"If you use an alias, you're not keeping quiet, you're hiding something. -- Eh? The living room?"

Inside the monitor that was pushed in a rack, there was no image of the living room. The camera's that were set up in other places showed normal images.

"They're in the middle of private talk."

"Ah, that's right. If you moved the camera, you would be peeping, I know. The mike would record the sound."

"If they end it before the evening, it would be a great help."

Mai sighed.

"Hirota-san is, how to say it? A stubborn person, right?"

"Idiots are found anywhere."

At his easy way of speaking, Mai grimaced at his easy manner of speaking.

"You, you think that all people excluding yourself are idiots."

"Unfortunately, I rarely meet people who are more intelligent than myself."

"This narcissist."

"I'm merely acknowledging the facts, Taniyama-san."

Mai glared at Naru's unruffled profile.

"Then tell me in what year the Taika Reform happened."

"Unfortunately, I have no interest in the history of an island country in the far east."

"... ..Ah, if you say it like that, I'll do it that way. Well, in what year was Shakespeare born?"

"Unfortunately, I have no interest in bald old men."

Mai sighed when he only made a superficial smile. She thought, if it had no relation to psychic phenomena, he simply didn't know about it, but as she already got exhausted of talking, she shut up about it.

"-- The jarring in the intercom is terrible, boss."

"The situation with the electro-magnetic waves is no good. I'll try to investigate that."

"What should I do?"

"Take the ammonia meter and--"

Naru stared in the direction of the entrance and Mai looked at it too. Noisy sounds came from the corridor.

"Hey, Nakai!"

"Shut up, you stubborn person. I'm not talking to you, Hirota-kun."

Those were Hirota and Saki's voices. The loud footsteps came closer. Mai involuntarily gazed at the two people inside the room.

Naru softly sighed and muttered, "This house really is incredibly noisy."

Chapter 3: Part 6

Hirota shouted into the direction he was going to.

"Who is stubborn here!"

Hirota intended to express common sense. Even if he was insulted, it was impossible that he would understand.

There is no such things like ghosts. There had should be some appropriate reason for the strange phenomena which are occurring in this house and the person Midori should be seeking help from wasn't someone like a psychic. Anyone in this world relying on such a company would be taken advantage of.

Saki turned her head to Hirota expressing disdain.

"If you want to deny ghosts that much, isn't it better to go home? This place will only make you feel uncomfortable, right?"

"Nakai--"

Ignoring Hirota's voice Saki looked away, turned in a different direction and stopped in front of the inner room. Beyond the sliding screen that was left open, they could see the inside of the room. The four and a half tatami mat sized Japanese style room had transformed into some kind of laboratory.

Saki smiled at Mai who raised her head in puzzlement.

"These machines are incredible... .."

"Ah, thank you... .."

"Do contemporary psychics use these kind of things?" Saki said and entered inside the room.

"But, it has no value if anything."

"Is that so?"

'Isn't the real intention behind showing that they are a little scientific, to gain the trust of the victim?' Hirota cursed without saying anything. Indeed, the company's style, which had no typical psychic atmosphere, contributed in having attained Midori's trust at the present.

Saki looked over the inside of the room again. Monitors of various sizes, machinery and computers.

"Taniyama-san weren't you? Even though you're also an investigator, haven't you done an exorcism yet?"

"Yeah," Mai looked a little bored. Both the young boss and the investigator glanced at Saki for a short while and uninterestedly stared in the direction of the machines.

"Sorry about just now. Hirota-kun's really stubborn."

"Don't worry about it," Mai said and laughed worriedly as she looked from Saki to Hirota who stood behind her emitting angry thoughts.

"I intend to be a sensible person. I think of someone as myself who is not merely an obstinate person."

"Yeah," Mai once again said seemingly worried over Hirota who yelled 'Hey!' with an angered voice.

"So does it look like a poltergeist after all?"

Saki looked at the three people inside the room, and cheekily sat down next to Mai.

"-- Aah, or was it called RSPK?"

"... ..We don't know yet. The investigation has barely started."

"Do poltergeists really happen because of PK? So it's not related to ghosts at all?"

"There are also cases that haven't."

"When you do investigations like this, do you see stuff?"

"Involuntarily though," Mai smiled.

"I see. I'm also someone who has seen things."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, what impressed me the most was just after I picked up my driver's license."

It happened when she went for a drive with a friend. When they returned during the night she saw a woman standing at the place where she came out of a long tunnel. The woman absent-mindedly stood on the highway's car lane. Saki had turned the steering wheel in haste and evaded her. After she cursed, her friend next to her had asked, 'What's wrong?'. Apparently she had not seen that woman.

When she told that story, Mai muttered, "Hm."

"When I looked to the back I thought it was idiotic, there wasn't anyone there. The road was straight and there was no place to hide. -- I thought more about it and remembered that I went at high speed at that place."

"Wow."

"When I asked afterwards, that tunnel appeared to be famous for the appearances."

"There are such places like that, huh," Mai said appearing to admire

her somewhat.

"Again?" said a voice from behind her back. At the entrance of the room Hirota had crossed his arms.

"You've imagined that kind of thing."

Saki turned towards Hirota.

"It wasn't my imagination, because I've seen it for sure."

"Well, you must have been half asleep."

"How rude, I was awake, because I was nervous to drive a long distance for the first time."

"A highway hypnosis, huh."

A quiet voice had interrupted and Saki looked blankly for a moment.

"Eh?" She turned towards the owner of that voice.

He watched over the monitors without interest.

"... ...What?"

"The highway hypnosis phenomenon. There's a phenomenon called like that. What you saw was an illusion."

The ones who were equally dumbfounded were both Saki and Hirota. They never thought that it would be denied by a psychic.

"That wasn't a illusion."

"For someone who has seen something called a illusion it is difficult to acknowledge that it was an illusion."

His voice was thoroughly cold.

"I told you you're wrong."

"Look what did I say?"

Saki and Hirota completely harmonized. Saki glared at Hirota and glanced back at the boy with the cold face.

"I have seen it for sure."

"Before you saw that woman, were you and your friend being silent?"

"... ..I suppose we were."

She remembered wondering whether her friend was asleep.

"It's cramped inside the car. When your field of vision is fixated to the front and in particular your fellow passenger asleep, you're alone in a state in which there is no change. To make matters worse there is no change in the highway scenery. The curves are also lenient and visual stimulus is limited."

"That's true, though."

"When the stimulus becomes monotonous, the human brain causes laziness and becomes unable to stay awake. Attention falters and the extent of consciousness narrows. The consciousness gradually undergoes a metamorphosis, falling into a state of some kind of hypnosis. As a result, one is attacked by illusions and auditory hallucinations. This is the phenomenon called highway hypnosis."

"But."

"Nakai-san was nervous because she went for a car trip for the first time, right? At the same time when you went home you had become tired from getting accustomed to driving. And wasn't it silent regardless of there being a fellow passenger?"

"That's true, but... ..."

"Moreover late at night, the flow of cars is smooth, the surroundings are dark and more than at daytime the stimulus of senses was limited. That is the cause of the illusion you saw."

"But, that tunnel is..."

"The sodium light that is lined up monotonously inside of the tunnel has an hypnotic effect. For that reason it resembles the flickering that is used in hypnotism. That's why there are many accidents in the vicinity of a tunnel's exit. That's all there is to it."

Saki was silenced. She didn't even say something like, 'But I saw it myself!'

"I don't admire blaming just about everything on ghosts."

"But, I've seen things. -- Generally, I can see them easily. I've been paralysed temporarily plenty of times."

"Things like that happen when you're half asleep," the boy said over his shoulder, "During REM sleep, the function of the descending system of the brain stem reticular formation declines and the muscles lose tension. When you wake at the time of this condition, it easily causes the so-called temporary paralysis, and because you're half asleep, you're literally in the condition of being half asleep and half awake and easily see illusions. It's only something like that."

"... ..Aren't you a psychic?"

"I intend to be a researcher."

"Then why, do you deny it like that? If you deny just about everything in such a way, isn't it like you're telling me that there's no such thing like

ghosts?"

"If it gets to the point of being praised by curious onlookers who like ghosts, being denied is preferable."

Saki raised her voice.

"Enough is enough! Isn't Hirota-kun the one who was flaring up at you? Won't you stop having taking it out at me? I am your ally after all."

"Ally?"

The face that returned a question exposed a disdained expression. The cool eyes pierced through her. The words snapped out.

"Give me a break. Deniers are not my enemy, Nakai-san. It's not even particularly limited to people who are shameless or foolish, because they agree as long as there is evidence that doesn't state the existence of something. The ones we really have to fight against are people like you who blindly accept things. People who worship psychic phenomena without a foundation and who seem to put just about everything under the word mystery."

Saki bent the shape of her mouth.

"People who are as tolerant as us are those who support the existence of people like you. Don't forget that."

"If there were no people like you, paranormal studies would have made fifty years amount of progress. If Nakai-san was to stop her blind acceptance, if people around the world were educated, it would be proven."

"If I am a person who blindly accepts things, aren't you who religiously does something like research also not the same sort of people who blindly accept things?"

"I pursue scientific laws."

"Hey, don't think that science is almighty. It's arrogance that doesn't approve of the things that exceed the human intellect. Isn't something like science isn't just gnawing at physical borders. I don't applaud the looking down on psychic phenomena with those words."

"The science that you know is only the one gnawing at physical borders, right. Letting yourself be exposed to ignorance to anything related to science in such a way, is not an act that is admirable."

"In this world there are things that can't be measured with just science!"

"That's a cowardly view."

His stern voice was completely unforgiving.

"That's the opinion of a despicable person who does not live on part of his own responsibilities. You just want to force your own responsibility

on fate or gods and so on."

"Excuse me!"

The one who cried out wasn't Saki, but Mai. Both Saki and Hirota looked blankly at Mai.

"If you were silent and just listened, it would have gone okay. Don't you have something like modesty, manners, or justice? Don't just talk down recklessly and say they're mean or cowards at another person with an opinion you can't agree with."

"Reckless? I just want to tell them my honest opinions."

"Where are they!"

Hirota unintentionally stared dumbfounded at Mai who had become seriously angry.

"I understand what Nakai-san is saying and I understand your point. When comparing the attitude of you two to me who cannot judge whether it's true or false, I have come to respect Nakai-san's opinion more. On the other hand you make an absolutely bad impression. Aren't you just digging your own grave with what you're doing?"

She was right, Hirota thought. Hirota was thoroughly a denier and thought of Saki's attitude as unpleasant, but seeing that he was talking down Saki even though he agreed with him, it didn't feel pleasant. But to be more frank, he unintentionally felt uncomfortable in wanting to

become Saki's ally.

"Apologize to Nakai-san."

"I refuse. I wasn't wrong."

"Blockhead."

"Don't you call that a reckless remark?"

"For someone like you, even blockhead is too praiseworthy. -- If you have that kind of attitude all the time, one day you will regret the situation you'll find yourself in."

"That's what you wish for right. I was thinking of trying to regretting just once."

"Bastard! Do you think of yourself as the greatest in this world?"

"Isn't it like that?"

Hirota's jaw dropped.

-- This guy's arrogance was unusual.

Saki suddenly turned her heel in front of Hirota, who didn't know whether to be shocked or in awe. She returned to the corridor in a rough

manner of walking.

"-- Nakai?"

"I'm going home," Saki curtly said and faced the living room. Quickly she took her bag, throwing a glance full of resentment towards Hirota and left through the entranceway.

A confused-looking Midori who came from the living room, made a worried face and looked from Hirota to the entranceway.

Chapter 4: Part 1

-- What happened?"

Mai, who was using a handsized instrument in front of the partition between the living room and the kitchen, waved her hand lightly at hearing Midori's voice.

"The world's greatest self-conceited big fool has bitten Nakai-san."

-- Eh?"

Midori inclined her head in curiosity and compared Mai and Hirota.

"Nakai and, uh, Shibuya-kun only quarrelled."

"Oh my," Midori stared in wonder.

"Or should I say, Nakai got argued into a corner."

"I'm sorry," Mai said, turning her head to Hirota.

"He's really a guy who knows no manners. He totally thinks there's no greater person in this world other than himself."

"No. Nakai also got up high on her pedestal. -- And it's because I said

some impolite things in the first place. That's inexcusable," said Hirota who spontaneously reflected on his arrogance.

"Please don't worry about it. It's not like Naru was having an outburst of anger. Naru is always like this to any person."

"-- Naru?"

"Ah, Narcissistic Naru-chan. Here you go, I invite Hirota-san to call him like that too."

"That's very strange to say."

"Right," Mai said, puffing with pride.

"Because the honourable Naru-chan is at a point where he really cannot be helped anymore."

A pensive Hirota looked at the grumbling Mai. Hm, that boy's arrogance also merited a special mention, but in hindsight, wouldn't the investigator called Lin, who seemed to ignore that uproar as if it didn't exist, be an unordinary person as well?

"... ..The members at your company have some quirks, haven't they?"

"Indeed. Because of that I'm always going through some hardship. Rather than work-related troubles, there are more troubles with human relations, damn it."

Provoked by the words work-related troubles, Hirota spontaneously asked her a question.

"Do you guys believe in things like ghosts?"

He had heard the boss's negative tone. He couldn't see a type that was neither a psychic or a common person in the girl before him.

"I believe it and I don't," Mai said with a bitter smile.

"... ..Even if I say that, a person with no experiences with this won't believe me."

"Yeah.That's true."

"I think they exist. It's fine to say that I know they exist. But I think it isn't something that matters to me?" Mai said, looked at Midori and lightly bowed her head. "--I'm sorry."

"It's fine," Midori smiled.

"But, what do you mean with it doesn't matter to you?"

"Because, if I saw absolutely saw something, I'd know it would be there, right? In the case of people who didn't see or didn't feel anything, they are people who are indifferent to ghosts. To such people I think it's fine if it doesn't exist."

"That's right... .." Hirota muttered.

"But whether there is something in this house is something we don't yet know. However, because it is certain that something is happening, it's not a bad if we do a thorough investigation, right?"

"That's... .. true."

"We don't think of doing something like blaming every little thing on ghosts. It's because we investigate what is happening. Naru seems conceited, but that's the only thing that's fair. We don't insist on something like non-existent things being there. So won't you please give us a little of your trust?"

When faced with eyes that looked straight at him, Hirota couldn't find it in his nature to call them swindlers.

"... ..I understand."

"That's great," Mai smiled, and once again turned her vision towards the instrument in her hand.

"-- What's that?"

"Ah, please don't cause it to move much. -- This is a machine that checks the air flow. When there are strange smells or noises, it checks the air flow."

"Hm... .."

"For example, what if this is the place of the smell? If the origin of the smell is not here, it will be called a mysterious smell."

"It's possible that the source lies below the floor and the surface."

"Of course it checks up that vicinity thoroughly. This is not my experience, but there have been cases of when a crack gets inside a sewer pipe and the filthy water below stained the floor, which caused the smell."

"I see... .."

Mai noted down the numbers on the digital display of the machine down.

"-- That's right, Midori-san. How is your mother?"

"Well, she's," Midori made a difficult face.

"She's resting upstairs. Although she just lied down on her side and continued to stare at the ceiling."

"Is that so?" Mai's expression clouded over.

Recently it has been truly awful. Just now she said strange things as well. I'm so sorry, you were probably surprised?

"Please don't worry about it."

"If we can clear up the cause, I think your mother will gain some peace of mind and calm down.Let us take care of this."

"Yes," Midori smiled and stared out of the window of the living room. The space that could be seen across the hedge outside the window facing the narrow garden, was becoming very dark.

"It has become a little colder, right," Midori said as she took the controller in her hand. She turned it in the direction of the aircon and pushed the switch button. Suddenly it became dark inside the room.

Mai instantly blinked. In the darkened room at that moment she heard the moving sound of the aircon that had been turned off up until point.

"--- Not again," Midori muttered in irritation. "I'm sorry. The breaker seems to have broken down. I'll replace it."

"I'll do it."

Hirota was the one who said that. He left the living room as if having grown accustomed. Midori went to turn off the aircon. Seemingly fed up, she let out a sigh.

"So even turning the aircon on and off will make it fail?"

"Yes, it's like that.Is it due to using the rice cooker? I wonder if it won't influence Mai-chan's equipment."

"We have an entirely different source of electricity. To break down at something so simple, must be terrible. Having to turn off the aircon each time you want to cook rice."

"Yes."

When Midori sighed, the electric light in the room came on. At the same time, the door of the living room opened. The one who showed up wasn't a returning Hirota, but Naru.

"Is it the breaker?"

"Yes, when I turned off the aircon, it suddenly happened."

"Where is the breaker?"

"In the dressing room."

"Thank you. -- Can you briefly show me your electric appliances after this?"

"Yes."

"And then, Mai."

Mai adjusted her posture.

"Yes, boss."

"Just how long are you going to hang around? Don't idle."

In just one moment Mai stared at Midori with eyes that appealed for consent for something.

"... ..Yees."

Chapter 4: Part 2

After they were served a meal by Midori, a light tapping was heard on the sliding screen when Mai received the next instruction of the setup at investigative location -- called the base by the members.

Neither Naru or Lin replied. Naturally in such a case it was the duty of Mai to reply.

"-- Yes?"

Hirota was the one who looked in. Moreover it was because Hirota entered the room and properly sat down on the tatami that Mai inclined her head to the side.

"-- Shibuya-kun."

Hirota's eyes were set straight on Naru's profile.

"Actually, I have a favor to ask from you."

"That's fine," Naru said and faced Hirota. "There's something I want to ask you as well."

"Let's hear that first."

Naru nodded and pulled open the file in his hands.

"How long did Hirota-san stay here?"

"Five days."

"Have you seen any strange phenomena during that time? -- For example, like what Midori-san talked about the other day."

Hirota considered the question.

"I've experienced the breaker failing three times. Just now was the fourth time. I've seen that the image quality of the TV is bad and I also know that the telephone's sound is bad as well. Whatever we tried to do, it had no effect."

"What about knocking noises or people's voices?"

"I didn't hear any. I can't sense any indication of people or someone looking at me. -- Aah, it seems like there have been many strange telephone calls. But it's not because I appeared."

Naru nodded and closed the file.

"-- That's all. Let's hear what Hirota-san has to tell me."

"Aren't you concerned about what I'm going to ask?"

-- Go ahead."

"Just now, Shibuya-san," Hirota said and glanced into Mai's direction. "You said you are just merely investigating, making sure it's by no means the fault of a ghost -- I wonder if that's the truth?"

"I investigate psychic phenomena. I don't waste my time on things that are not related to psychic phenomena."

"I see," Hirota whispered, then lowered his head slightly. "-- Well then, why don't you receive my offer as a helper?"

Mai widened her eyes slightly and gazed at Hirota. She was surprised at how unexpectedly thorough the proposal was.

"Then let's hear your reason why."

"It's because I as well want to know what is going in this place. Rather than being a bystander, I thought, 'Isn't it better to stay close to the truth by helping you guys out?' That's why."

Naru made a thin smile. His never smiling eyes gave off a turbulent mood.

"... .. Are you observing us?"

"I won't deny that. Are there any inconvenient things about being observed?"

"If it's worry about being hindered by amateurs, then there are plenty."

"If you order me around, I will try to not be a hindrance as much as possible."

"I treat workmen roughly."

"I don't mind."

Naru made a sarcastic smile and looked at Mai.

"Mai. -- Since he said it like that, use him as your assistant. Isn't it great that you have a porter?"

"B-but... ..." Mai shifted her gaze to Hirota. She held some resistance to treating a senior as an assistant.

"Taniyama-san, I don't mind. Just use me."

"But Hirota-san, you have a job, right?"

When Mai told him that, Hirota suddenly recalled a thought and raised his hand.

"Speaking of which, don't you guys have school?"

Mai glimpsed at her boss, but could not expect any timely help from him.

"I took off because of work. I notified my school properly."

"I see," Hirota seemed to have understood that.

"I have taken off as well. That's why you can use me without any worry."

"Yeah... .."

If he said he was helping, then there was no reason to decline. The equipment was heavy in general, and to be clear, Mai could use another hand.

"-- Well then, go at it at once," Naru said, and Hirota adjusted his pose a little. "Tonight we will all sleep below. I want to use the second floor room that Hirota-san is currently using for investigation."

"-- Understood."

"Mai, have Midori-san and her mother assemble in the living room."

"Yees."

"When that's done, set up Hirota-san's room for a suggestion

experiment."

"Yes," Mai replied, then stared pitifully at Hirota-san. "Well, I will say it without reservation."

"Sure."

"Can you please transport all that equipment over there?"

When Hirota looked back, a number of equipment that couldn't be transported in one or two times were stacked against a wall.

Although Hirota faltered for a moment, he nodded disappointedly. He's a man who does not go back on his word after all.

Chapter 4: Part 3

After Hirota carried the equipment to the second floor, Mai began to connect that equipment to each other.

"-- Just what are you guys about to do?"

"A suggestion experiment. -- Please keep this a secret from Midori-san and her mother, okay?"

Hirota frowned.

"Why?"

After sensing Hirota's somewhat prickly manner of speaking, Mai blankly looked up at his face and made a faint, strained smile.

"Well, after this we're going to do the suggestion experiment. We're going to investigate whether RSPK is happening in this place. We are going to watch whether making a suggestion has an effect on Midori-san and her mother. Apparently, if the people themselves know what the purpose of the experiment is, there will be no effect."

"-- Suggestion?"

"It won't be a weird suggestion. They'll be told to move something in this room this night."

"Excuse me but," Hirota was bewildered. "Is there any meaning behind this?"

"Um, well. RSPK is a phenomenon that is unconsciously caused by a person. That means that there is always -- though it's a bad word to use, an offender. Therefore, when making a suggestion, it will happen in the way that it was suggested."

"You're saying that either Midori-san or her mother is the offender?"

"That's why," Mai grimaced. "I know I used a bad word. It means that we try to confirm that it was someone's unconsciousness in order to test whether it's RSPK. I understand that if the suggestion doesn't succeed, it at least means there's no relation between Midori-san and her mother and the strange things that have happened in this house. In this way we're trying to eliminate any ideas one by one."

"Hm," Hirota hummed. He still wasn't satisfied.

"Isn't suggestion something like hypnotism? Who's doing it? Isn't it dangerous?"

"Naru will do it. It will be alright, Naru-chan has properly studied under the guidance of a specialist. During cases like these experiments will definitely be done. You'll get used to it, so please don't worry."

"... ..Understood. Then? Why is there so much equipment here?"

While wiring the camera, Mai pointed out an equipment placed in the corner of her room with her gaze.

"First of all, please put that machine in the centre of the room."

"This?"

"It's a machine that transmits stuff like vibrations. On top of it we're going to place the thing we use for the suggestion. It's often something like a vase."

"Is here fine?"

When Hirota placed the steel-made machine down fifty centimeters from all four directions down, Mai nodded.

"Can I please have the small machine over there? The one with the number 2511."

"The one with the maker's name Brüel & Kjær?"

"There are two machines right? Please put one on top of the other. It's the vibrometer. One more group consists of two identical ones."

"This one?"

"That one. That's the angle meter. Please establish it in a similar way

and place the cable of the vibrometer and the angle meter over here."

He passed the cord over as he was told to do and Mai connected it to the machine below the camera.

"After that, that large equipment. It's the place sensor. Please place it near the edge of the room and give me the cable."

After doing that Hirota looked at the room. He had placed one machine at the centre and arranged some machinery surrounding it. No matter from where the wiring spread, it was connect to the machine that was placed below the camera on an angle decided upon by Mai.

"-- Lin-san?"

Mai faced the infrared camera, calling him.

"The cursor wire isn't settling in at all. -- It's fine? Is it alright? -- Understood, I'll keep it disconnected."

"What is it?" Hirota said, and Mai grimaced.

"The machine isn't working well. The noise on the infrared camera is terrible. I worry for the machines, because this house is very troublesome."

"I see. Even though you're a girl, you're knowledgeable about this kind of stuff."

"It's not like I'm knowledgeable about machinery. It's practice, just practice. Because a demon-like teacher worked me hard."

Hirota wryly smiled.

"To work under him must be tough right. -- And?"

Hirota looked over at the equipment that was arranged in the center of the room.

"-- Ah, that? Um, on top of that one we place the target object. But the place sensor and the camera are observing it. Normally we have the room hermetically sealed, but with the breaker falling out the we can't trust the house's electricity, so we had to pull the electricity from below. Since we can't completely seal the room, this is just the simplified version.

"Hm."

"After that we just leave it alone for one night. If the target object moves, it will be recorded on video and the sensor. No one can enter the room, so no one with a bad intention can move it, right? If there was an earthquake, it will be recorded on the machine. As well as if the target object was somehow moved by an unseen force"

Hirota hummed again.

"How to say this -- You guys really aren't like mediums at all."

"Right."

After Mai smiled, she scowl a little at Hirota.

"It's better to not to speak of mediums in front of Naru. You'll be a victim of sarcasm. He himself has not the intentions of a medium."

"But, aren't mediums just mediums?"

"He wants to be called a ghost hunter. I think he dislikes the word medium."

"Why?"

Mai smiled indifferently.

"Well that's, naturally, because they're suspicious, right. Even if you changed our name, it's not like it will change that we're suspicious."

Hirota wryly smiled.

"Taniyama-san, you just recognized that you guys are suspicious."

"Because I think there isn't anyone who are suspicious like us. An investigator is like this, and the boss is like that."

"So you know that you're seen like that from an outsider?"

Mai smiled.

"The payment for the part-time job is very good."

"I don't understand young girls. Do you really want money that much?"

"That's because I'm an orphan," Mai explained. "I'm paying for my own expenses, so I need money."

Hirota turned completely bleak.

"... ..I, I'm sorry."

"You don't have to apologize. If you apologize, you'll make it very uncomfortable."

"I see, I'm sorry."

Mai laughed at Hirota's unintentional second apology.

Chapter 4: Part 4

Midori felt strange. She felt as if she was slowly sinking to the bottom of the atmosphere.

It was gloomy inside the living room. Only one light lit Midori's front. A rod swayed from left to right like a metronome in front of a small light bulb. When the rod passed in front of the light, the lamplight was obstructed, so it seemed as if the light was flickering.

She was told that she would see light in the dark living room that she shared with Reiko. Because she was separated from Reiko's figure, it didn't enter Midori's vision of observing the light.

What she heard was only the faint systematic sounds that appeared to be from those machines and Naru's voice. She heard that the voice, which was unemotional from the start, went on to lose intonation. His figure wasn't in her vision. It was just a flat voice, that she sometimes heard with a slow and stupid tone, would generally go on to whisper meaningless things.

Midori sensed her mind gradually growing dim. What showed up in her mind at first were the various memories that came from beyond this house. When she recalled it, Midori's tiredness accumulated along with it. The many times the appliances had broken down, the many times of taking telephone calls, the many times she got riled up from the repair shop's words. It all felt like a wasted effort.

The fatigue so far burst out in one go and eventually even becomes a

troublesome thing to think about. As if being sunken inside the water of weariness, Midori's consciousness wanted to begin relaxing.

Only a voice came down there.

... ... Statue... ...

... ... Hanuman... ...

It was the figure her deceased father had bought in Bali. The statue of the demigod monkey Hanuman.

... ... Hanuman shall move... ...

... ... Tonight.

Midori mindlessly took those sinking words sink. What came to mind, was what she saw one time, the richly coloured Balinese dance.

-- The demigod monkey dances.

"-- That will be all. Thank you for cooperating with me."

Suddenly, a clear voice rang as the light of the room was turned on.

Midori reflexively blinked her eyes. What her eyes picked up after getting finally used to the light, was Naru and Hanuman in his hands.

The instant her eyes blinked at a strong light, the thoughts that

surfaced in her head up until then had vanished completely. However -- her eyes were drawn to Hanuman. Moreover, she felt like there was kind of meaning behind it.

"I'm sorry, but I will be borrowing this for tonight."

"Yes," Midori nodded absent-mindedly. When she turned her head, Reiko was also watching Hanuman with a similar puzzled expression.

"The second floor's room -- Hirota's room will be used for investigation tonight. I'm sorry, but please do not enter it."

"Understood." After saying that, Midori caught the attention of Naru's eyes. "-- Have you come to understand something?"

Turning towards the equipment all over the place, checking the consumer electronic goods, raising to the roof on top of that.

"Not yet, nothing that I can talk about."

"Is that so," Midori cast down her eyes with a somewhat discouraged feeling.

"It's enough if carry on as usual tonight. If something happens, there will certainly be someone in the base."

"Yes."

"The camera is also on, so it's fine if you face the camera and give a signal. It doesn't matter if it's a trivial, if anything curious happens, please let us know."

"Understood."

When Midori nodded, Reiko abruptly stood up.

"-- Mother?"

Reiko watched the glass door that continued beyond the dining room. A frightened expression arose.

"... ..Someone's there."

Midori looked at the glass door right away. The dining room was dark. The light had been turned off, so what could be seen beyond the glass was only blackness.

"Someone is watching us from there."

Naru approached the glass door. He gently opened it. Of course, there was no sight of anyone there.

"Lin. -- Did any sound enter the dining room's microphone? Yes, understood," he said, and turned towards Reiko.

"There is no one in this room."

"There was until just now."

"There are many people inside the house, they're loitering around here and there. If you're used to living with only two people, I think you're mindful of any indications of humans or sounds, but please endure it for a while."

"But, there really was someone there."

"Sound can unexpectedly often be transmitted through walls. Beyond the dining kitchen is the base. Our careless investigator might have been noisy. The high and low sounds will more than often escape. I think at night you may be more mindful of this, but that is the thing we do for the investigation."

"But... .."

"Please calm down. Currently we're operating with three cameras and five microphones inside the house. If someone gets inside, it will certainly be picked up. It's not possible for the surveillance network of the equipment to fall out and someone to loiter inside the house."

"... ..Is that so."

Midori lightly patted the back of Reiko who nodded.

"It's not good to be that frightened."

"It's fine," Naru said. "It's fine to say whatever it may be. That's why we're here to investigate. Even if you think you're imagining it, please say it. We'll check it. In exchange, please trust that we're professionals. If something seems strange, we'll thoroughly investigate it. If it doesn't seem strange, we'll say so. At those times, I'd like you to trust those words."

Reiko nodded.

"I see -- I see. I understand."

For the first time in a while, Reiko returned to a calm facial expression. Midori gratefully watched Naru. The eyes facing her were cold, but she didn't think of them as unpleasant.

Chapter 4: Part 5

"... ..That was the sixth time."

Mai looked up at Naru who returned to the base and showed her raised fingers.

The clock pointed at three in the morning. Midori and Reiko went to the second floor at 11 in the evening. After that, Reiko had complained six times about abnormal things in the space of four hours.

There are people here, I can hear voices and other sounds. -- She complained like that, but the equipment didn't report any abnormalities. Whenever Naru went to explain it to her, she would calm down, but that would repeat again soon.

"If she's in such a state, won't she catch any sleep at all up till now?"

"Looks like it."

The returned Naru sighed. With three people, furniture and equipment inside a room, there wasn't much space left. Just until now Hirota was up as well, so it had been even more cramped.

"What should we do? She keeps thinking about those things."

"It would be better if we can give her some peace of mind," Naru

pondered, "Perhaps prescribe her some medicine. Give her a placebo."

"Medicine? What's a placebo?"

"So ignorant."

"Geez, I'm sorry about that."

"It's fake medicine, I guess."

"Ehhhh," Mai said and thrust a finger at him.

"I don't think that kind of deceitful act is good at all!"

Naru disagreeably waved that hand away.

"I don't mean it like that. Keep quiet if you don't know anything."

"But."

The one who interrupted them was Lin.

"-- How should we do it?"

"It's probably better if it's done in a flashy way. -- Can you do it?"

"I don't think I'm qualified though."

"That's true... .."

"Hm? I can't follow your conversation though."

Naru ordered Mai who inclined her head.

"Mai, the first thing you do this morning is contact Bou-san."

"Bou-san has medicine?"

The person who was called 'Bou-san', is like what his name implies a monk, a medium so to speak, and also a cooperative worker of Shibuya Psychic Research.

Naru nodded.

"People of her era probably have a profound familiarity with Buddhist and Shinto ceremonies. Either is fine, but Bou-san has a better persuasive power by appearance."

Mai laughed.

Among the cooperative workers there was also a miko. The monk didn't look like a monk either, but the miko all the more didn't look like the

type.

"A long-haired monk and a miko with heavy make-up. There's just a scant difference huh," Mai chuckled and nodded. "I see, you don't know whether there are any psychic phenomena, but you just want an exorcism to give the mother peace of mind?"

"Hm. You finally understand."

"Of course. -- Geez, don't think you can fool people the whole time."

"Isn't that the truth?"

"Yeah, yeah. Say whatever you want. -- I'll give him a call."

"Isn't it better to watch the clock?"

"There's no way Bou-san is asleep at this time. If I call him in the morning, I'll wake him up when he's sleeping in," said Mai as she left.

As he saw her off, Naru faced Lin.

"-- What do you think?"

"A placebo might be surprisingly effective."

"There was some talk that there has been a person who committed

suicide in this house."

"The year isn't specific, so it's not clear to me either. Shall I investigate it? I don't think it's very essential though."

"Just ask Yasuhara-san to investigate it."

On one of the monitor screens, they could see Mai on the phone. The sound was off, so they didn't hear her. The phone was in the living room. At Mai's feet they saw Hirota wrapped in a futon.

"Does the equipment indicate any abnormalities?"

Lin showed a somewhat bitter smile to Naru's query.

"Paranormal curiosities? -- None."

At that time they caught Mai facing the camera and saying something to them. She pointed at the infrared camera placed in the living room.

"Lin, speaker. -- What is it, Mai."

Sound came into the speaker. They could hear a bell of the phone's ringing.

"What should I do?"

"... ... Pick it up."

Facing the infrared camera, she nodded and picked up the receiver as ordered. An awake Hirota sleepily looked at Mai.

"Lin, the sound of the telephone."

Lin operated the machine. He had been granted permission by Midori to record incoming calls and connected the machine to the line.

The telephone's sound came in the speaker. The incredibly jarred noise and Mai's voice calling out. The voice on the other line was distant. Because there was so much jarring, they couldn't hear it very well.

"-- Are you recording this?"

"I started recording as soon as we were connected to the line."

The two listened carefully to the speakers' sound. The telephone cut off at about two minutes.

"Can you cut out the jarring and extract the voice?"

"I'll do it."

When he looked at the clock, it was already close to half past three in the morning. In normal circumstances, it wasn't a time in which another

person makes any calls to someone else's house. -- To say nothing of Midori and Reiko as the receivers.

"If there is a call, make sure to record it. Late at night, switch any telephone calls to us."

"-- Yes."

Afterwards, the telephone rang four times in one hour.

"The mother is asleep, and now the phone's ringing..."

Mai's grumbling was ignored.

Midori woke up at seven to go to work. Reiko followed soon, and after that they broke the seal of the room that was used for the investigation.

The statue of Hanuman, that was set up last night, had not moved from its place at all.

Chapter 5: Part 1

The ringing of the doorbell happened in the evening, close to four o'clock. Hirota who had appointed himself as the caretaker picked up the intercom in a haste. Without rushing around the trio of Shibuya Psychic Research seemed have been snooping inside the house until just before noon, and was taking a nap by the time Hirota woke up.

When he picked up the intercom, a woman's voice answered, "It's Sasakura."

The Sasakura household lived right next to Midori's house. Hirota had already caught sight of Mrs Kazumi many times.

"-- Yes."

The door facing the entrance way opened. Kazumi opened her eyes.

"Oh my."

"Weren't you Hirota-san? -- Where's the lady of this house?"

"My aunt is currently out for groceries.Is there something you need?"

When it came to Kazumi, Hirota didn't have much of a good impression of her. One cause was Reiko being oversensitive to the Sasakura

household to the point that she'd be on the lookout. Another cause was that Hirota himself had met Kazumi for the first time a couple of days ago and it was dreadfully uncomfortable to be questioned by her to the point of interference.

"Well then, perhaps I will wait for her," Kazumi said and grabbed the door Hirota had pushed open, and opened it further. Hirota stopped her in a confusion.

"... ..This bothers me."

"Oh my, how come?"

Seemingly displeased, Kazumi looked up at Hirota. Though firm, she was a woman of short height.

"I can listen to what you have to say to her."

"She will be back soon right?"

"It might take some time though."

"If that's so," Kazumi said as she looked at Hirota with upturned eyes. "Then I'll still wait inside. Aren't you hungry? If you like I'll make something simple out from the things I'll borrow in the kitchen so you can keep up until dinner."

"No thanks."

With a disgusted feeling he looked down at Kazumi.

Her way of speaking seemed as if she was a close friend of Midori and Reiko, but that the association between the two and the Sasakura household doesn't go any further than passing notices was something that Hirota already knew.

After looking let down, Kazumi caught sight of a camera standing in the nook of the entrance way.

"-- That, what is it?"

"It's a camera that was left in our custody."

"Oh, you have guests?"

Kazumi tried to peer inside the house from the space between Hirota and the door. Hirota felt like yelling that she should cut it out, but he could barely endure it. That's because he thought it was inexcusable if he worsened the personal relations of the Agawa household.

"Yes. Currently we have a visitors inside."

"Yesterday quite a lot of people went in and out right? What kind of people are they? Relatives?"

Hirota took a deep breath and endured the feeling of wanting to raise

his voice at her.

"They are my friends."

"They're staying over? Until when?"

"I don't know."

"Somehow they carried in a lot of luggage, it must have been tough to carry it up."

I wonder if she isn't truly observing us, Hirota thought.

"-- At any rate, me and my friends had to do it," Hirota said, but when he tried closing the door Kazumi captured his hand.

"-- Wait. Who are those people, really? They're not friends, right? There were children of around senior high school age after all."

Kazumi's eyes didn't stop peering at Hirota's eyes.

-- This woman, somehow there was something strange about her.

He didn't think that the inhabitant of a neighbouring house would show interest to such an extent.

"The friends of senior high school age, um... ... are my juniors at a club.

A lot of mechanical applications break down inside this house, so I had to come to take a look. Yeah, I was part of the electrician's club."

If there had been such a club, -- there hadn't been one at Hirota's school -- that was something he knew little about, but at least he gave a suitable reply at any rate.

"After this, we will be making a lot of noise again."

"I see," Kazumi said and released Hirota's arm.

Hirota realized that he himself had been perspiring cold sweat. Perhaps it was due to not being used to telling lies, or whether it was the bad feeling Kazumi's improper curiosity gave off.

Kazumi was still peering inside the house. Though she had an interest in how many other people there were in this house, he wondered if she would normally do it like this.

"-- Well then."

"Are you truly Midori's cousin?"

Hirota stopped closing the door with a startle.

"Why have you suddenly started to make this a lodging? Isn't there some kind of purpose behind this?"

"-- What's with this talk?"

"Isn't it like that?"

"Could we please call it a day?"

Once again Kazumi took hold of Hirota's arm. Her palm's temperature felt lukewarm throughout his shirt.

"Aren't you actually a bodyguard? Isn't there something happening at this house? Did you know that a person committed suicide at this place back in the day?"

"Could you please cut it out."

"The person who lived here before left because of that. It made them feel bad. -- Aren't you actually here for such a reason? Just before this, I heard that from the boy who came to ask. Isn't that your friend?"

Wasn't what gave off a bad feeling to the previous inhabitant not the house itself, but could it possibly have been the neighbours? Hirota thought while taking in the glance from the woman's persistent glance.

"Hey, why are you hiding it? Is there something bad going on?"

When Hirota thought 'please forgive me', he unexpectedly heard a quiet voice coming from the back.

"Hirota-san, what's wrong? Why are you still here?"

When he turned, he saw Naru standing in the entrance.

A grateful Hirota relied on Naru for this. He shook and untangled himself from Kazumi's hand and pushed her shoulder lightly.

"That will be all for now, excuse me."

He shook off Kazumi's hand who tried to stop him and closed the door. Without a moments delay he locked the door and unintentionally gave a sigh of relief.

Chapter 5: Part 2

"-- Who was that?" Naru asked Hirota who scurried back into the living room.

Until a while ago he was sure he had been on the sofa, but -- Lin appeared to have been napping --, he had seemingly been awake for some time.

The curtains were closed. Hirota confirmed that and nodded lightly. That was because he didn't want to feel like Kazumi was peering from the garden inside the house.

"The wife of Sasakura. The neighbours on the right."

Hirota sat down on the carpet in the living room.

"Honestly, you saved me."

"It seems she is a vital person with extreme curiosity."

Hirota looked at Naru.

"Since when were you listening?"

"Roughly, from the beginning. I woke up at the sound of the doorbell."

"I don't admire your eavesdropping."

"I was merely gathering intelligence. Thanks to that you got saved, right?"

Hirota grimaced.

"What kind of person is she, an acquaintance?"

"She appears to be called Sasakura Kazumi. Together with her husband and a son, they're a three person household. Her husband is a teacher at a public middle school and her son is currently a senior high school student. -- I've heard that much from Midori-san."

"She seems to be extremely curious about the inside of the house."

"That seems to be the case. My aunt seems to dislikes it quite a bit."

"Is that 'my aunt' something you call middle aged women in general? Or what you call your parents' sisters?"

"-- That is... ... of course."

"Did you think your own pet theory that you called, a person who hides something must be hiding a crime?"

"That's what that woman said."

"Didn't you think that Midori-san calling you Hirota-san wasn't very much like what one would call a cousin?"

Seeing the wicked smile surfacing on that handsome face, disappointed Hirota.

"So you realized."

"That's because Hirota-san doesn't seem to be quite skilled at lying."

"You truly have a bad personality."

"You're a fast learner. -- May I ask you the reason why you're pretending to be her cousin?"

"We were introduced to each other by Nakai. I said that I would be her bodyguard because it seemed hopeless. It would be indecent in front of others so I ended up playing the cousin."

Because he wasn't a person who lied by nature, he felt relieved to talk about his own thoughts.

Naru lightly smiled.

"-- Well, I'll give you that."

"... ...Hey."

"I suppose you can see that much without a reason."

Hirota glared at Naru. He turned and smiled.

"... ...By the way, tea please."

"-- You're telling me?"

"Of course. Didn't I tell you that I treat my workmen roughly?"

Hirota choked up unintentionally.

"... ...Understood."

While Hirota made tea in the kitchen, Naru scrutinized the mirror -- window in the dining room.

No light came in so it wasn't significant, but he opened the curtain that Midori suspended above the mirror. She said that leaving it closed stifled her.

"-- Even if you became a narcissus, I wouldn't have known," Hirota said astonished, and placed the teacup on the table.

"Just as I was hoping for," Naru lightly said and settled at the table.

"... ..Why a mirror... .."

His voice whispered.

"It's because of that bad lighting, right?"

"Even then the need to make it into a mirror cannot be found anywhere. No matter how bad the lighting is, wouldn't have become something made of glass?"

"Would they have the intention to conceal the defects? Because directly outside the window there's the neighbours' wall."

"I understand if this house was leased, but the previous owners had the intention of living here themselves and reconstructed it. If that's the case, to do such a thing is all the more... .."

Unexpectedly, Hirota himself tried to think about these things. Certainly by doing that, he felt that no matter how bad the lighting was, even if what could be seen from the window was the neighbours' wall, making it into a mirror wouldn't have made it any better. -- At the very least, if it were up to Hirota, he wouldn't even have thought of making it into a mirror or something like that.

"... ..It's as if he didn't want to see outside the window... .."

Hirota raised his face at Naru's voice. Somehow his voice had become steep.

"You're not going to try to tell me that it's something stupid like it's because there's a ghost or something."

"... ..But I didn't get to say anything like that?"

Hirota grimaced.

"The previous owner has a reason for wanting to shut the window... .."

"It's fine if we ask the previous owner right."

"If we could do that."

Hirota frowned.

"-- We can't?"

"The real estate agent said that they didn't know their new address. They didn't leave behind their contact address."

"... ..What the?"

"The real estate agent who sold this place, while this house was on loan, intermediated the whole time. I'm certain they have a long

association. Nevertheless, even if they sent out moving postcards and left a message ever since, there has been no communication at all from the owner."

"Isn't that because they knew that this house was a trouble? Knowing this would become a trouble later on, they didn't leave notice of their address."

"That is also a possibility."

Hm, Hirota thought. He thought about it a little, but other than that he couldn't guess the circumstances of the owner leaving no contact address.

"-- That reminds me," Hirota suddenly remembered. "How was the result of last night's suggestion experiment?"

"It didn't move."

"That means, -- Um, RSPK? Wasn't it that?"

"It appears to be something different."

Hirota showed a light smile.

"Is there a possibility that you failed your suggestion?"

"Not at all."

To be told so quickly, exhausted Hirota somewhat.

"You really are a person who has great confidence in himself."

"I'm modest when it comes to the facts."

When Hirota became even more exhausted, a harsh bumpy noise occurred. Hirota surveyed his surroundings. It was a steady knocking sound that came from somewhere. He thought he heard it from the direction of the window behind Naru's back.

When Hirota rose up without thinking, Naru stopped him with his fingertip. While remaining in place, he suppressed his breathing for a while.

Steadily, it became clear that the interval of the knocking continued only a little.

Hirota stood up. Naru couldn't stop him anymore.

Hirota opened the window with the mirror. He removed the lock of the latch and in that short space he opened the window, and thought that if it were glass he would have seen the one who tapped it.

In the small range outside the window, the neighbouring wall stood in the way. The space between the neighbouring house and theirs wasn't something that a person could enter of course, and yet there wasn't even

a shape of an animal. The window of the neighbour's house a little further away was closed as well. He tried to look up, but the window on the second floor too was closed.

"Was someone there?"

Hearing it from the back, Hirota replied with a no. With an annoyed feeling he closed the window.

Chapter 5: Part 3

Mai stood on her tiptoes. She thought she had heard the sound of a doorbell, but ended up wondering whether that was a dream or reality.

Mai had been allocated into Midori's room. Midori had moved to the Japanese-style room used by Reiko and gave up her own Western-style room.

Even though she had experienced going to her friends' rooms many times, an office lady's room had a totally different atmosphere. She found it interesting.

The greatest difference was the big full-length mirror, she thought without care while changing her clothes. Because she never ceased to fall in some hole or climb to a high place, she basically didn't wear skirts during investigations.

She carried her pouch with things to wash up and got out of the room. Facing the camera placed in the hall of the second floor and perhaps facing someone who might be awake and watching the screen, she said, "Good morning."

At any rate, the thing she had to do after waking up was to go to the base and receive instructions. After washing her face, Mai stopped in the corridor on the way to the base.

"Hnn... ..."

She didn't know why. When she approached the full-length mirror, her feet stopped no matter what. It's not like she did such things like unwrinkling the crease of her clothes.

The full-length mirror was directly opposite of the corridor and seemed to be embedded inside the wall. Because it was at the exact height of the alcove, it reached Mai's height if she raised her hand just precisely. The edges made of plain wood were big.

When she inclined her head, peered in and looked carefully, light shone into the mirror. The reflected door behind Mai had opened.

Mai was startled. The reason unclear to Mai herself. She was surprised to the point of becoming pale, and looked back with a jump. Unexpected words crossed her mind.

-- Don't come in.

At the surprise of her own thoughts, steadfastly looked back..

-- Don't come in. Stay there and get out.

Reiko who opened the door, smiled when Mai came into her view.

"I'm home. -- What's the matter?"

Mai couldn't answer.

-- Quickly.

(I have to say, welcome back.)

-- Get out and don't come back.

(If I don't say it, she will worry...)

"Wel... .. come... .. back."

Even speaking out required the strength of her will.

Carrying a shopping bag, Reiko passed before the door of the living room and walked until the front of the dining kitchen's door.

"Is there something wrong?"

"I... .. was a bit surprised... .. because I was thinking about something... .."

"Oh my," Reiko said with a smile. "I'm sorry."

"Not at all."

Mai could barely laugh. Reiko bowed a little, opened the door of the

dining kitchen, and until she went inside, she desperately kept a smile on her face.

(My... .. legs are, trembling.)

There was the sense of sweat on her back.

-- Why do my feet always stop in front of the full-length mirror?

(... ..Understood)

Reiko's figure vanished and Mai could finally wipe that overdone smile off her face.

(I'm, afraid of the full-length mirror... ..)

She didn't know why she suddenly had that kind of feeling. She was scared to the point of having goose bumps. Even though she had to go into the direction of the full-length mirror to get to the base, she was scared to go back.

All of a sudden she heard a sliding screen open. It was just a little behind Mai's back.

"What's the matter?"

Mai shivered, hearing Lin's voice.

-- Taniyama-san?"

Mai turned her head into the direction of his voice. Even though she knew who was standing there, she still couldn't help but be frightened.

"What happened?"

The one who stood there was the tall Lin after all, and Mai finally let out a sigh.

"Did something happen?"

Lin's forelock covered one of his eyes. That's why she stared back at the eye that was visible.

"... ..I, that full-length mirror is scary."

Lin turned his head into the direction of the full-length mirror.

"I don't know why, but it's very frightening."

After Lin frowned, he placed a hand on Mai's back. He lightly pushed her into the base.

"At any rate, get inside. You look pale."

(Beyond the full-length mirror... ...)

While she stepped into the the base, that suddenly crossed her mind.

(... ...is *Kosori*... ...)

Chapter 5: Part 4

Bewildered at a Mai who sat down as if she couldn't stand up, Lin called Naru. Sitting in the dining, he soon came with Hirota to the base.

"-- What's a kosori?" Naru asked, but Mai only shook her head.

"I don't know. Because I just thought like that just then."

Naru frowned. Hirota let out a deep sigh.

"Are you trying to make me believe there are spirits here? -- I thought Taniyama-san would be a better kid though."

Mai scowled at Hirota.

"What are you saying."

"You just woke up. Weren't you simply half-asleep?"

"I'm not skillful at being half-asleep to the point of standing up."

"I wonder."

Hirota sighed disappointedly when Mai glared right at him.

"Hear me out. Even if I were half-asleep, there's still a different cause between my being half-asleep and Hirota-san's."

"Ooh."

It was obvious by the look on Hirota's face that he was teasing her.

"You call the state of consciousness of being half-awake ASC, right. That's what we call an Altered State of Consciousness. It's abbreviation of that phrase. According to scholars, a severed altered consciousness is d-ASC, which means discrete Altered States."

Hirota blinked his eyes.

"-- Huh?"

"At the time of an altered state of consciousness, your psychic ability and spiritual ability becomes sensitive. As you can see I'm just a common girl, right? When my consciousness is altered, I'm no long normal."

Hirota's legs almost gave in.

"... .. I see."

"When I'm half-asleep I'm a woman with a sixth sense. If you want to blame it on being half-asleep, isn't that just fine? Say it after you have given it some thought."

-- Mai." Naru's quiet voice interrupted. "You're saying that by yourself, did your feelings just go away?"

"... ...They did."

Having truly said it without any feelings, Mai frowned.

"Um, anyhow. I'm incompetent when I'm awake. It can't be helped I guess. It's because of my physical constitution."

"Incidentally I want to ask, what we call an altered state of consciousness is also shown in the consciousness of one who is hypnotized. How would you make the distinction between the spiritual senses by means of half-awake consciousness and hallucinations by means of a hypnotized state?"

"Uhm... ..."

Naru expressed a cynical smile.

"If you can, I wouldn't want to say things like a superficial second-hand opinion to an amateur?"

"... ...I'll reflect on it."

Naru gazed at Mai hung her head and then moved his gaze to Hirota.

"Please ignore the words of this stupid person."

"... ..Uhm... .."

"While you're at it, please feel free to ignore Mai's strange utterances. She can merely express herself by saying how she's feeling. Whether there is any meaning to it or whether it doesn't go any further than just a joke is something you will understand as we go further into the investigation."

"Of course it is... .."

... ..A joke, he was about to say, but got interrupted.

"By the way, what I heard from her in detail is that in the past her jokes have many times actually resulted not to be merely jokes. -- However, this gain has nothing to do with you, it would be great if you could ignore it."

"Ah, yeah."

While nodding, Hirota for some reason felt the biting words and not satisfied with his explanation.

"After that, Hirota-san," Naru said with a suspicious looking smile on his face. "Three cups of tea. At once."

His blood was about to boil to his head, but his chance was taken away before he could yell at him.

"I treat my workers very roughly."

"... ..Understood."

Mai grinned at Hirota who secretly clenched his fist.

"Cocoa for me. Do the milk properly okay? And just one cube of sugar."

Firmly suppressing the additional anger, Hirota nodded. He once again heard Mai's voice behind his back after leaving the room.

"Midori's mother is tired, so don't bother her."

His anger reached a limit and exhausted a downcast Hirota.

Chapter 5: Part 5

"Hirota-san, I shall... .."

Reiko stared in confusion at Hirota who was stirring the pan of milk.

"It's fine. I will do it."

For some reason he seemed to be angry, but she was puzzled because she didn't know the reason. Hirota bent the milk pack roughly.

"Um... .. Hirota-san."

"It's fine. I will take care of it."

"No, if you don't add the milk little by little, it will lump up?"

Hirota dropped his shoulders.

When Reiko tilted her head seeing that, the phone rang.

Reiko became a little tense all over. It was the unidentifiable phone call that happened many times before. Due to that, she became concerned in regards to phone calls in any circumstances.

Because Hirota made a doubtful face, Reiko picked up the telephone

receiver in a haste. Timidly she held it against her ear.

"... ..Yes.It's Agawa."

Ah, not again, she thought the moment she held the receiver against her ear. The jarring noise was awful. From the other side a dim voice could be heard from far away.

Even though Midori had listened to it many times, she said didn't understand what they were saying. But to Reiko it was for some reason understandable.

-- Get out.

-- If you don't get out, I'll curse you with murder.

Reiko put the receiver down.

Just for how long was this going to continue?

"Is there something wrong?"

Hirota had come to her side and Reiko raised her face. She went through the trouble of smiling at him.

"It seemed like another prank call."

Once again she felt like she was being attacked by dull headache. Lately it was a headache that seemed like head was fastened with a soft thing that she worried over the whole time. It wasn't painful when she drank, but this couldn't go on for forever. Even though she had felt a little more at ease since last night.

"Are you alright?"

Hirota stared at Reiko's face. He sensed that her complexion was getting worse. Reiko who answered yes when she looked into Hirota's direction, didn't look alright at all.

"Aunt, you're not feeling well?"

After she shook her head and said no, Reiko abruptly looked over her shoulder. Someone said, 'I'm home'. It was Midori's voice.

"... ..Don't," Reiko whispered, and then she shouted, "Don't! Midori, you must not come in!"

"Aunt?"

"Don't come in, stay where you are and get out----!"

-- Please, please.

-- *Spare that child at least.*

At the same time Midori rushed into the room, Mai and Naru came running into the dining room.

Hirota stood stock still next to Reiko who had screamed and cowered, and looked flustered at the three.

"Mother?"

"Are you alright!?"

Mai and Midori supported her and Reiko raised her face, but her face seemed somewhat empty and her facial expression had reddened.

"Mother... .. Let's lie down for a bit?"

When Midori said that, Reiko whispered with a broken expression, "I have to prepare... .. the meal."

"I will do it. So? Please rest?"

Midori held Reiko in her arms and took her to the second floor.

-- Don't. Midori, you must not come in.

-- Don't do it, stay where you are and get out.

Hirota was deep in thought when he closely listened to the voice that

could be heard repeating on the base's speakers.

Isn't this similar to what Mai said? -- No, Reiko who originally did this a while ago. When she was distracted she blurted out things, so that was what Mai remembered and might have unintentionally unintentionally repeated.

It must have been like that. -- but... ...

"At what time does Bou-san arrive?" Naru asked Mai.

"In the evening. He didn't say a time though. He said he can only come after he's done with work."

"Who is?" Hirota got a word in.

"Ah, a co-worker will come," Mai said before looking up at Hirota's face a little. "It's Hirota-san's most disliked medium though."

Hirota was disappointed and didn't reply to this.

"It's a person who always collaborates with us. We requested help, but medium is his side job and he works for another business, so he can't come until evening."

"Long after evening?"

"Yes. I wonder if his work is dragging on."

"Just why is this medium even needed for?"

"That is--"

When Mai began to speak, the doorbell rang. Her complexion brightened in a flash and Mai stood up.

"It's Bou-san," she cried out and ran out of the room.

Chapter 6: Part 1

"Good evening."

The one who raised his optimistic voice and entered the base was Yasuhara who he met in Shibuya Psychic Research's office some time ago. Behind him was another person, a man had accompanied him.

After bowing his head a little Hirota compared Yasuhara to the man behind him again.

Was the man of about the same age as Hirota? He didn't look that much like a medium. His face appeared carefree. He thought that this guy was also quite a tall man. He left an impression with his somewhat light hair that was grown long into a ponytail. -- Hirota hated men who had long and dyed hair.

When the man smiled and said "Yo", Naru bluntly nodded and looked at Yasuhara.

"-- Did you complete the thing I requested?"

"Yes. All of it," Yasuhara said and showed the paper bag in his hand.

"Thanks for the hard work."

Possibly having noticed Hirota's dubious expression, Yasuhara smiled

after gazing at the man.

"Ah, this person is named Takigawa-san. He was formerly a monk in Mount Kouya. You could say that he's a cooperative worker or a helper. -- Well, at any rate, he's that kind of person."

Hirota again returned a nod at Takigawa who bowed his head a little. He kept away from speaking his mind that he didn't look like a monk.

"This is the client's cousin Hirota-san."

When Hirota greeted him again with a "Hello", Naru called him out.

"-- Hirota-san. Tea please. For all the people here."

Again, he wondered, but he had forgotten the tea due to that disturbance a while ago, so he reluctantly stood up.

The one who gave him the final blow to his disappointed state was the monk Takigawa.

"Ah, do iced coffee for me."

Without replying, Hirota left the room. Possibly having seen his great displeasure, Mai had chased after him and tapped his arm.

"This time I'll help you out."

"Yo, Naru-chan. Long time no see," Takigawa said while he squatted down in the middle of the narrow room. "How was your home town?"

"It's considerably better than Tokyo in some parts. -- Thanks for the bouquet the other day."

"-- A bouquet?" Yasuhara said while shutting the sliding screen. "Could it be a proposal? If that's the case I'll hold Takigawa-san in contempt."

Takigawa laughed with a complacent smile.

"Discrimination is not allowed, young man."

"I have disdain for your sense of sending a bouquet. It would have been horrible if the red roses came with a ring."

"Idiot. -- It was a flower offering."

Ah, Yasuhara muttered.

"Funeral flowers? I see, so nowadays you can send flowers overseas," Yasuhara said and bowed his head lightly in the direction of Naru.

He had returned to his country for the funeral service of his older brother who had died in Japan. He had come to Japan to look for his brother who disappeared in Japan and eventually returned to his country

with his remains. -- Yasuhara once again recalled.

"Please accept my sincere condolences. I'm sorry for not giving anything for the memorial service. -- is what I'd say, but this is too late."

Naru only made a bitter smile at this.

Takigawa watched Naru.

"Even so, you came back quite early, huh. I expected that you wouldn't returned for about another half year."

"I'm not that carefree. I'm the one who is responsible for that office after all."

"Ah, I see," Takigawa said and raised a hand towards Lin who sat in front of the equipment. "Lin hasn't changed either."

At this he simply returned a courteous nod.

"Even more so," Yasuhara kept an eye at beyond the sliding screen. "What's the matter with Hirota-san? How come is that person serving us tea?"

A sarcastic smile appeared on Naru's face.

"He proposed out of good will that he wanted to help out with the

investigation, so I happily accepted it."

"Hmm... ... What a benevolent person, isn't he?"

"Would I make a person of good will serve us tea?"

Takigawa persistently looked at Naru, but Naru in question made a cool face.

"You haven't changed at all huh."

"I can't complain."

"Now now," Yasuhara smiled. "Wasn't Takigawa-san quite cold to Hirota-san as well?"

"What's with that?"

"Hirota-san appears to be quite a denier. Yesterday evening Shibuya-san complained about it on the phone. He appears to have various things against us and just now he was also glaring at you."

"Really, well. I feel bad for the deniers."

"Oh? You feel sorry for them?"

"That too. I can't help but sympathize with them. They have to pass

through pain each day."

"Haa?"

"They'll be bullied by Naru-bou."

"Pfft," Yasuhara grinned and stifled his laughter again. "I'm not saying anything. The one who said it was Takigawa-san after all. -- Ah, here are the things that you requested."

Yasuhara picked up the paper bag and handed it over to Naru.

"-- And?" Takigawa looked from Naru to Lin. "For what reason did I have to specially forego my closing party and come here?"

Naru answered this very concisely.

"I want you to perform an exorcism."

"On who?"

"No one."

"Wha--at?" Takigawa raised his voiced and Yasuhara was once again confused.

"What do you mean by no one?"

"Like I said. There is no one, but I want you to do a flashy performance," Naru said and made a cynical smile. "What? I even have dry ice or lasers prepared for performance?"

"I don't need it."

"I want you to do the Mikkyou ceremony as flashy as possible. In order to create a strong impression of an exorcism."

"Hey, wait a minute," Takigawa scratched his head. "Can you explain it in a bit more detail? For what reason do I have to do that sort of thing."

"Like I just said. For the reason of making people think you did an exorcism."

"Look here. I heard from Yasuhara about what you've been asked to do?"

Because he didn't know the whereabouts of the Agawa house, he made Yasuhara guide him and along the way he had roughly heard about the circumstances.

"In short, this house has something like a poltergeist happening here, but why do I have to do an exorcism for appearance's sake only? If the state of affairs can't be improved, even the client won't agree with this right."

"About that," Naru gazed at the paper bag that Yasuhara brought. "I prepared the props for the performance. That way there ought to be no problem."

"What does that mean in other words?" Takigawa put his arms together in disappointment. "Are you making me pretend an exorcism? I have to put on a play in order to make you guys look successful?"

"Something like that."

"Are you making a fool of me? You brat."

When Takigawa was about to put pressure, the sliding door abruptly opened. A rage-filled Hirota stood there with a tray in one hand.

"-- I heard that, you swindlers!"

Chapter 6: Part 2

Hirota placed the tray roughly on top of the tatami mat and looked over the four people inside the room.

I knew it, he thought. That's why they didn't say anything. They didn't put any confidence in their colleague who was a medium. Both Midori and Reiko were in imminent danger of becoming easy marks.

"As I thought, you guys did have that kind of intention."

When Hirota glared at them Naru took a light breath.

"... ..What do you mean by that?"

"You're tactfully deceiving Midori-san and her mother with the intention of swindling their money, aren't you!"

"We're not doing anything like swindling, our reward comes from contributions."

"Do you think you can trick me with that kind of talk!"

"You will receive the documentation of the request from Agawa-san. It's precisely specified on there."

"If you think you can deceive me with those things, then you are greatly

mistaken!"

When Hirota shouted, a carefree voice coming from behind almost dejected him.

"-- What's with the uproar?"

When he turned around, he found Mai blankly holding a cup and standing in the corridor.

Without minding her, Hirota walked over to Naru's side with rough and noisy footsteps.

"-- As I thought, you intended to trick the Agawa family. You planned to use a mysterious man, have him make a performance with props, then say an exorcism was done in order to swindle away your rewards. Am I right?"

"Huh? Wasn't Bou-san going to do a placebo?" Mai interrupted and Hirota looked back at her.

"Placebo?"

He stared at Naru whose collar he almost grabbed.

"-- What's that?"

Naru frankly seemed to be gloomy.

"I will explain it now. -- Why are all of you so simple-minded?"

"Hey!"

"-- Please sit down."

Hirota unintentionally felt pressured after being watched with stern eyes. Reluctantly he sat down in that place.

"There are idiots who mistakenly understand the thing called placebo as a mysterious thing," Naru said and glanced into Mai's direction. "As a matter of fact, it's harmless even as a mysterious thing. It's an accepted medical and pharmacological term. To a patient it's a pharmacologically inert substance. -- For example, there have been cases of patients being cured from the psychological effect of drinking distilled water, lactose, starch or a physiological salt solution that was given under the pretence of medicine."

"Could that perhaps be," Takigawa spoke up. "the placebo effect?"

"Indeed. You could say it's the placebo effect. The medicine given is called a placebo. In the case of taking in large quantities of the medicine may have dangerous side effects or in the case of addictive drugs, it's possible to mix a percentage of that into the placebo, thus becoming beneficial to the patient. -- This placebo is also used in new medicine experiments. Mixing up medicine and placebo, then extracting the mental effects is for the sake of ascertaining the actual effects."

"Oh, I see," Mai said. "Because of that Bou-san has to do a placebo."

"Teacher," Takigawa meekly raised a hand.

"I will explain it now. -- The client's mother, Reiko-san, has become psychologically wrecked due to the mysterious phenomena ever since they moved. Even at the sound of wind she is alarmed that there is something is there. Reiko-san's state is the client Midori-san's greatest unease as well. Because of that I want to give her a placebo and give her peace of mind. That's why it's better to make the ceremony as flashy as possible. It's for the sake of leaving a strong impression that an exorcism was done."

"I see," Takigawa muttered. "So that's why. But you couldn't possibly be telling me to go home only after faking a prayer? -- Even I have some pride."

Naru shrugged at Takigawa's words.

"I don't think I require help from Bou-san in this case."

"Oh."

"For example," Naru pulled out small electrical parts from inside the paper bag. "This is the cause for the breaker falling out frequently."

"What's that?"

"The switch of the breaker. When I analyzed and examined the breaker of this house, the internal parts were nothing but 5 amperes regardless of the fact that it was labeled 30 amperes."

"Oh I see," Takigawa muttered, but Mai inclined her head.

"How much is 5 amperes?"

Naru bluntly made a disagreeable face.

"What are you learning at school."

"Girls are usually weak at electricity."

"The product of electric currents and voltage are equal to the electric power. The voltage of families in Japan are 100 volts and 500 watts. The breaker falls out one to four times of the electric current, so if two coolers operate at the same time the breaker is expected to break."

"Woowow."

"The color irregularity is due to a magnet. If you open the frame, you'll find a strong magnet put inside. The noise of the screen is due to the corrosion of the antenna circuit. This is evidence that it was corroded with ill intentions. The other troubles of the electrical system are similar as well. Either way it has been disguised very well so that people wouldn't know just at first glance."

"In short, that means someone has been intentionally tampering around?"

Naru nodded at Takigawa's words.

"The telephone noise and the TV screen's beat impediment is due to radio waves. The image interference confirmed the adding of fundamental waves. Even so, there is no source for the voice. I cannot imagine it was simply due to the radio waves."

"Hm."

"From simple work to elaborate work. It's clear that someone did this with ill intentions. This is troublesome."

"Aside from the electrical system?"

"It's not like I have investigated thoroughly, but from the example of the electrical system I think it would be similar. At least, within the scope of Midori-san's complaints, troubles that weren't caused intentionally didn't occur."

"That means, what?" Takigawa put his arms together. "Someone deliberately broke in? Trespassed inside the house?"

"Something like that I suppose."

"But, for what reason?"

Naru shrugged.

"You won't know until you ask the offender," Naru said and looked at Yasuhara who was sitting down by the wall seemingly cramped.

"-- Yasuhara-san, how was it?"

Chapter 6: Part 3

When the subject suddenly was brought up, Yasuhara straightened his back in a haste.

That's because he received a phone call with the request to do some shopping, which was the thing he had to do early in the morning, and bring along a map together with Takigawa, while simultaneously having to make a report.

Yasuhara impatiently opened the bag he had brought. He pulled out a notebook from the inside.

"Let me see, First of all, I leafed through the newspapers in the library and couldn't discover anything concerning the matter of the person who committed suicide. Of course, I also checked the obituary columns of the newspapers and ward information."

"As I thought... .."

"Because it is also a possibility that the matter wasn't reported to the newspaper as a suicide, I tried to get information in the neighbourhood."

"Why?"

"Well," Yasuhara frowned before pushing up his glasses. "This neighbourhood is a district that was rapidly developed over the past twenty years. In a condition of a place that only used to have farms and

fields, houses were erected and a town was created. The influx of people was intense. Place names and house numbers were often amended. -- Somehow, when examining the newspapers an unease around this issue remained, but let's put that aside. For that reason, I couldn't discover a person who lived around this place for generations."

"I see."

"Then eventually, though they didn't know how many years before that such a story had taken place, there was only one person who knew that a suicide had happened in this house."

Naru weakly smiled.

"Could they perhaps be Sasakura-san from next door?"

"You're correct. By the way, the Sasakura family -- the family of three, the middle school teacher Takeshi, his wife Kazumi and their son in senior high school, Masaru -- they came to live here in the house next door six years ago. Because of that, I tried to look for and ask the people who lived in this neighbourhood before that time, but not one of person knew about a suicide case."

Hirota leaned forward. On his mind Kazumi's unnatural behaviour had revived. In that situation the man, who had asked her like Kazumi told him, was Yasuhara.

"Is it perhaps possible that Sasakura was lying?"

Yasuhara nodded.

"It's very strange indeed."

"But, why?"

"Well, if I may say so. I heard something interesting concerning that matter at the real estate agent who mediates this house. The houses of this neighbourhood were mostly built at the time of the construction boom around Shōwa 47. They said that the site was narrow and that the buildings were not of a good standard either. In the recent years there was a frenzy of reselling and buying up plots of land and that's how the town steadily became reorganised. Both this house and the neighbouring houses were built at the time of the construction boom and were left behind in the frenzy."

"How is that--?"

"Around the construction boom of Shōwa 47, Tanaka Kakuei's plan to remodel the Japanese archipelago came out and was suddenly accelerated due to his inauguration as the Prime Minister. However, in the year 46 the Nixon Shock happened and in the year 48 the oil crisis occurred, so the state of the world was by no means in a good situation. Since there was a lack of materials and the state of affairs was bad, many of the buildings that were built in that period were quite crude. In that time there were problems such as sea sand being mixed into concrete and the corrosion of reinforcing bars."

"Hm... ..."

"You could say that the Sasakura house was no exception, and because of that it is thought that Sasakura-shi wants to rebuild the house. They have one son who is in senior high school and when he becomes independent he may want to have his own room. If you think about when this son marries in the future, it's possible they'll all live together. Unfortunately, it's too cramped."

"... .. I see."

"This house was for rent the whole time and the real estate agent in charge of the brokerage also did the intermediation of the leases. That real estate agent appears to have received numerous proposals from the Sasakura-shi to purchase the house. However, the owner never felt like putting it up for sale. It is said that the amount of money that Sasakura-shi presented was shockingly cheap," Yasuhara said, while watching Hirota's face. "On top of that the Sasakura household seems to be considerably strong-willed."

Hirota grimaced. He wondered if he was done with that strong-willingness.

"The owner and the real estate agent's impression were not very good. So when this house went on sale, they dared not to sell it to the Sasakura-shi."

Hirota opened his mouth.

"You sure did some great investigation on the internal circumstances."

Yasuhara cheerfully laughed.

"Wouldn't you say that I let the cat out of the bag just now? Carrying myself like that is my strong point."

Hirota was secretly at his wit's end. Why was the lot of this Shibuya Psychic Research so hard to deal with?

"... .. In other words, you're saying that the Sasakura are planning this in order to put this land up for sale?"

"Wouldn't that be a very likely possibility?" Naru interrupted. "Do you know what made the value of this house so cheap?"

"About that," Yasuhara leafed the notebook. "I couldn't clear it up at all. What the real estate agent said is the same as what Agawa-san said. It's only that, according to the people in the neighbourhood, the owner and his wife lived in this house for about two months."

Hirota inclined his head.

"I haven't heard of that, but I wonder if that's not possible?"

"There's more. -- According to the neighbours, this isn't a house what people would live in."

Hirota knit his eyebrows.

"I wonder if that's because there's a problem with the building."

"The real estate agent was very tight-lipped concerning this matter. Because of that, I tried with the contractor, but... .."

"How in the world were you able to investigate all that within one or two days?"

"Oh no. Wasn't it obvious that I started moving as soon as the request came in? -- Let's leave that aside. It seems that this house has changed owners many times. The one who owned it the longest was a person named Takenaka, the previous owner. Takenaka has leased this house for 13 years, but in that time the real estate agent didn't change and the contractors didn't change either. According to the contractor, no person lived in this house."

"-- Why."

"There seemed to be various reasons. Only, there was one person who complained that "The house was strange", "There's something there", "Something appeared". There are numerous troubles with the house itself, such as rain leakage. The one in charge looked completely displeased."

"Does that mean that the Sasakura did that the whole time?"

"Well that's," Yasuhara made a difficult face. "According to the contractor, from the first time this was leased, he had heard that kind of talk. That was from thirteen years ago, so there's no link with the

Sasakura-shi who moved here six years before."

"-- That can't be."

Yasuhara shrugged.

"What they said worries me. -- At any rate, I don't quite understand why they're so intense about this. There isn't much interaction with the neighbours and it doesn't look like a popular spot to live on. I can try to expand the investigation radius a little more," Yasuhara said before looking at Naru. "But perhaps, that is no longer necessary?"

"No," Naru murmured. He appeared to be deep in thought about something. "In any case, please continue."

"Roger."

Chapter 6: Part 4

"Well?" Takigawa said. "I don't know very well what's going on, but in any case I think there's a tangible person behind the troubles inside this house. Except the mother is frightened, so is it alright for me to fake an exorcism to give her peace of mind?"

Naru nodded.

"But, what if the damage keeps continuing? Isn't it better to catch the offender and put screws on them?"

"That's true, but... .."

"I say this as a faith healer though. Rather than telling her "There was a ghost and we exorcised it", I think it's much better to say, "The one who played pranks on you is this person". Unless she's deeply superstitious."

"I agree," Hirota nodded. That would have been the response of a respectable human being. -- Though he didn't know what a type like Saki would say.

"I wonder if there's proof?" Hirota asked, but Naru shook his head.

"There's no direct proof huh. It would be great if we could film the offender breaking in."

Just when he thought, 'I see', he heard footsteps. When he stuck his face from the base and looked, Midori had just descended down from the stairs at the same time, then came to him.

"-- How is aunt doing?" Hirota said.

Midori made a somewhat bothered smile and looked to the back. The sound of light footsteps. Reiko soon showed up from going down the stairs as well.

"Is it okay to get up?" Hirota asked and Reiko smiled.

"Yes. ... I'm sorry, I was a bit out of it."

"Not at all... ..."

"Everyone must be hungry right? Please wait for a moment," Reiko said and looked towards the base. "I thought I heard the door bell just now. I wondered if the people you invited were here."

"Ah, yes... ..."

As soon as Hirota said that, the door bell rang. Midori went down to the entranceway and opened the door.

"-- Yes?"

"Hey, are you already done making dinner?"

That voice leaped inside of the house.

"That's because I saw you come home just now."

It was Sasakura Kazumi.

She looked around the house from the door crevice and presented a package she held in her hands.

"There are a lot of visitors. It must be hard to prepare a meal right? So I thought I'd bring you something."

Midori and Reiko exchanged glances for a moment.

"It's not ready to eat though. I only did some preparations, so if you would lend me the stove for a while, I can immediately finish it up for you."

Midori made a worried smile.

"No, it's fine. I'm sorry, but there's no reason to do such a thing for us."

"Jeez, what are you saying?" Kazumi laughed. "If you're in a pinch, we're in the same boat. Aren't we fellow neighbours?"

"Well, actually my mother is about to start preparing something."

"It's only one dish. I'll just borrow your kitchen."

Midori stopped Kazumi from getting inside of the house.

"Um, -- Please wait for a moment."

When the exhausted Midori got the better of Kazumi, Hirota's voice interrupted.

"Let her in, Midori-san."

"Eh," Midori turned around. She saw Hirota who had put his arms together. Behind him in the corridor Naru had shown up.

"That's just right. Let me in."

Both Midori and Reiko seemed bewildered, while Kazumi fully smiled.

"Isn't that right? With so many people around, making dinner must be difficult."

She merrily came through the entranceway and entered the house.

"Now where was the kitchen?" Kazumi said, then arbitrarily went into the direction of the living room.

Midori watched a bewildered Hirota.

"Hirota-san... .."

Hirota nodded at Midori who had lowered her voice, and turned to the back. He looked at Naru who was leaning against the wall.

"Shibuya-kun. I think it's better if we quickly cleared up this sort of matter."

Naru sighed a little and nodded.

Both Midori and Reiko looked from Hirota to Naru for a short moment.

Chapter 6: Part 5

Kazumi had cheerfully entered the kitchen, so she frowned when Hirota called for her.

"Excuse me, but could you come here for a moment?"

"Ah, -- But."

"Leave the cooking for later. We'd like to talk to you for a while."

"I see."

While traversing the dining room, Kazumi felt her face slowly stiffen. Hirota carried a sharp facial expression.

When she went to the living room, Midori and Reiko had been waiting with Hirota along with the boy of senior high school age who had been around since yesterday. In the corner of the living room a camera was installed. Because it was aimed in her direction, Kazumi involuntarily ducked her head.

"What's the -- matter?"

"Please sit down."

Hirota's voice had become strict. Kazumi sat down with a feeling of

unease.

"Actually," Hirota began to talk. "This place, in this house electrical appliances break down one after the other."

"My," Kazumi muttered. "How dreadful," she said, while hesitantly letting her eyes roam around the room.

"After doing various investigations, we understood that all of these malicious things were purposefully done by a person."

Hirota could see how Kazumi's face suddenly became pale.

"Ah... .. Is that so. What about that?"

"We think that Sasakura-san might be the offender," Hirota declared. Kazumi's face paled even more, but now it instantly broke into a flush.

"Don't jest with me. What a thing to say."

Hirota exchanged glances with Naru, but Naru seemed unwilling to cooperate. So he had to summarize the story he heard by himself. Both Midori and Reiko were wide-eyed, while looking at Kazumi.

"It's not me," Kazumi said. "What a false accusation. Where's the proof? -- Let me see the proof."

"I don't think anyone is the offender but you."

"There's no proof, right? This is slander. Go ahead and show me."

Kazumi's face was a deep red and trembled.

"Show me the proof."

Hirota inwardly sighed. There was no proof. But if he threatened with this much, it wouldn't be strange if she never did these pranks again.

While he thought about that, Naru called in the direction of the camera.

"Lin, get the tape."

The camera moved.

Mai immediately ran down to the corridor and came back with two cassette tapes and one video tape.

"I'll borrow the audio."

Naru took the tape and undid the cassette deck. He pushed the play button and what came out from the speakers were chaotic street noises. There was a long and hard sound.

-- This is?"

Hirota looked at Naru.

"The sound of a bell. This morning we determined from some samples we picked up that this is of a bell signaling a train arrival at the train station. We abstracted this from the many mysterious phone calls that came in this morning. This one is from 5:56 in the morning."

"So?"

"The microphone constantly picks up on sounds in this house ever since yesterday. When we investigated the sounds that were picked up inside this house at the exact same moment, the very same sound was recorded."

Hirota took a long hard look at Naru.

"What the?"

"After we investigated the situation of that sound, we knew the range of the source. The situation of the sounds greatly resembled and the place where the mysterious phone calls took place is not a long way off from this house."

"About how close is it?"

"The range calculated from the sound's situation mostly matches. Still,

it's within range, because there is a difference in the object distance. The difference is about eight feet, so the range is roughly five meters. It turns out that it is within five meters of the living room."

A diameter of five meters meant that it could only come from the road, inside the Agawa house or the Sasakura house.

"So what?" Kazumi said, while almost getting off her seat. Hirota stood in front of the door and wondered whether she wanted to escape this place.

"I have one more tape."

Naru exchanged the tapes. What they heard next was a man's voice.

A man talked in a hoarse voice.

-- Get out. If you don't get out, you'll be cursed. So get out quickly.

"This is the voice that was abstracted from the last phone call. This seems like only a mere prank call in itself, but in the other calls the characteristics of this man's voice may vary."

Kazumi turned pale.

"If I compare them, it can be numerically judged whether this is the very same person. -- Sasakura-san, do you consent to recording your, your husband's and son's voice?"

"Don't joke around!"

Kazumi stood up.

"No! Don't joke! I don't know anything about this. We didn't do anything. What an awful accusation! I won't get trapped by the likes of you all!" Kazumi shouted. "If you say that we did it, then tell me how we could have gotten in! How can you get into a house that's locked up!"

A bewildered Midori put a word in.

"Um... .. Sasakura-san doesn't have the duplicate key. If she had one, she wouldn't say that she would like to keep a duplicate key?"

Naru made a thin smile.

"You have thought up a thing called a camouflage."

Kazumi smiled.

"How stupid. This isn't a third rate detective novel."

"You don't need a duplicate key. There's a secret path."

"That can't be."

This time Naru set up the video tape. A strongly contrasted monochrome image was projected on the TV screen.

"Here is where the reverberation of the ultrasonic waves change. -- Right here."

Shadows of various sizes could be seen in the place Naru pointed at.

"Huh, what's that?"

When Hirota asked, Naru coldly answered.

"Perhaps a trace of a cylinder lock. These are traces of a keyhole and a knob shaft."

"A door? Where is this kind of thing."

"The full-length mirror at the end of the corridor."

"Ah," Hirota muttered.

"If someone broke in, then there should be a secret path. If you think about it, both that full-length mirror's size and shape resemble a door. If a glass pane was embedded in the door like all the other windows, how would it look like? Wouldn't it look like a full-length mirror at first glance?"

"... ... Certainly."

"If you aim the ultrasonic waves at the mirror's surface, you will discover that there's nothing beyond the mirror. The wall you expect to be there does not exist. The mirror is exposed to the outside. If you inspect part of the frame, it is dislocated about one to five millimeters from the surface. Perhaps a cosmetic edition was put on top of the original frame. You can't see the hinges, so it must be a door that can be opened from the outside."

"But, why is it like that?"

"Outside that door -- back door is a very narrow back yard. It is as wide as the building and the length is only but 80 centimeters. The back yard is adjoined by buildings constructed on three sides and doesn't fulfill its purpose as a garden. One could say it's obstructed because of that."

Midori spoke.

"That garden wasn't part of the building in the back?"

It was visible from the window on the second floor, so she knew there was a garden on the other side of the house, but she didn't think it was part of their own property. There was no back door and the real estate agent said nothing, so she didn't think about it too deeply.

"Have you been down to the garden?"

"Of course. There is a door for sure. The other side of the mirror was left

as it is and the frame was made of aluminum sash, but the knob was already removed and plugged up. There are bolt-like holes in two places by the wall near the door opening. Perhaps in order not to be casually opened, it was fixated from the outside with metal boards or something. However, it was removed. Instead, the wall in the back of the building was used to wedge in a bar in those two places."

Hirota hummed.

"I see... .."

"Other than space for a ventilation window, there is nothing in the back of the building facing the back yard. There is not any kind of opening by the neighbouring house on the left, only the Sasakura house has a window facing the back yard."

"So you're saying that only the people of the Sasakura family are the ones who can get in and out?"

"It should be said that they're the most suspicious. It's comparable to the voice recordings. What's more reliable is to investigate the telephone call records of the Sasakura house. It can become direct evidence if possible."

Kazumi stood upright.

Hirota looked at a dumbfounded Midori.

"Midori-san, are you going to sue them?"

"Eh?" Midori blinked.

"Unless Sasakura-san gives us consent, the telephone company cannot present us the telephone call records. If Midori-san files a complaint and takes the problem to the courthouse, it becomes possible."

Midori looked at Hirota and Kazumi. After being puzzled for a moment, she decisively shook her head.

"I only want you to stop doing these pranks. If you can promise me that alone, I won't file a complaint."

"-- I promise!" Kazumi shouted. "I promise. So, don't sue me. My husband is a teacher. What if the school gets to know about this."

Midori looked up at Kazumi and nodded.

"... ... Understood."

Chapter 7: Part 1

"That's it for me? So I only had to come here?"

Yasuhara laughed at Takigawa's grumbling.

"Now, now. Isn't it great that you didn't work at all?"

"That's true, but the old man is a little hurt."

"If you want to work, I think there's some dismantling work to do after this?"

"I, I want to do work that makes more use of myself."

"Isn't that work that makes use of your physical strength?"

"Sob sob sob. No way, I don't want to do that."

"Even if Takigawa-san pretends to cry, I think that I feel for you."

"The boy feels for me huh."

"Well, you may have any amount if it's only compassion. My good faith and courtesy aren't frugal."

"W-Why you."

Mai giggled.

"The case has been settled without any damage, so isn't it fine?" she said, then turned her head to Naru who was in thought in front of the equipment.

"Naru, it's fine to prepare the withdrawal, right?"

While she said that, Mai's hand was already holding the equipment's connector.

"No. -- Let's watch the situation for one more night."

"Eeeh. Why?"

Because she was delighted at going home and sleeping at ease, Mai couldn't hide her disappointment.

"Because I'm not satisfied with the explanation."

"Not satisfied with what?"

"I don't know."

"What's with that-"

Naru was indifferent to Mai's objections.

It was something like a small thorn. Why did the inhabitants in this house not settle down, why did they leave and say things like 'something appeared' -- Why were mirrors and not glass placed in the windows altogether?

Yasuhara's investigation, Mai's words and deeds, the price of the house that was far too cheap and what was said about Reiko's things.

He recollected just about all the small catches. Those were just trivial things that he didn't know why it weighted on his mind at all, but if that was only so much he wouldn't be satisfied no matter what.

"What, Naru-bou. Could it be that you're taken in by the rumoured appearances Yasuhara told us about?"

Takigawa peered into his brooding profile.

"... ..It's not that I'm being taken in, but... .." Naru said and looked at Takigawa. "Bou-san, if you were to replace a window glass with a mirror, at what kind of time would you do it?"

Takigawa looked blankly.

"When I have no mirror and there's no surplus of walls to hang a

mirror on."

"What if there was?"

"I guess it would be when the room is narrow and I want to make it look wider."

"What if it isn't that narrow."

"Hmm.Interior."

"What if all the windows in the entire house are mostly like that."

Takigawa gaped.

"The entire house? That's just idiotic."

"What if it is like that, what would be the reason for doing so?"

Takigawa pondered.

"If you're okay with a somewhat crazy reason, there has to be some kind of intention to try to make a mirror image."

"There are only windows. The other windows aren't windows that reflect the inside of the mirror."

"In order to observe the inside of the house by means of the figures that appear in the mirror."

"Other than that?"

"If the mirror isn't the main point, then it's because of not wanting to see the outside."

After saying that, Takigawa corrected himself.

"It's not that. If it were so, it would be fine to just append curtains or blinds. -- It's because someone's watching from the outside."

"Why?"

"In a situation where one become anxious about they're being watched from the outside, I suppose it would be unpleasant to have gaps between the curtains and blinds."

"... ..I see."

"What could this riddle be about? You're not saying that the windows of this house all have mirrors?"

"You're right on."

"That means a cause for no space for people to peep in from the outside, doesn't it?"

Mai poked Takigawa.

"Why do you know that?"

"Eh? Isn't Naru-bou concerned about this? If someone was peeking in from the outside, which is something other than a spirit, he would be able to decide on the withdrawal, right?"

"Ah, I see. Bou-san, you're smart."

"Hohoho. Are you getting a better opinion of me?"

At the same time when Takigawa said that, it suddenly became dark.

"-- Ah?"

The one who let out a sigh was Naru. The electric light in the room had gone out and the corridor had become pitch dark as well, but it was bright inside the base because the computer was operating on a different source of electricity.

"The breaker fell out. -- Lin."

Naru threw the electricity parts he had taken out some time ago.

"Replace it. I can't stand this annoyance."

It happened when Lin answered, "Yes", and stood up.

-- A woman's scream could be heard.

Chapter 7: Part 2

Midori shook her hand. It was covered in wheat flour.

Because it was cramped in the kitchen with Reiko and Hirota, who was helping out, she left the dining room and immediately went towards the bathroom to go wash her hands.

She turned the tap of the washbasin in the dressing space. While she was washing her hands, she smiled for the first time in a while.

-- I'm glad.

She was happy that the true form of her unease was made clear. Although she was worried about living next to strange people, judging from how Kazumi behaved, the pranks wouldn't happen again. Was Reiko also relieved with this? She made a cheerful face. -- She was happier than anything else.

On smiling and attempting to stop the water, Midori suddenly raised her face and gave a start.

What she was surprised at from the outset, wasn't something she knew herself either, but soon it became known.

Inside the mirror of the washbasin, Midori and the door of the bathroom behind Midori's back was reflected. The door of the bathroom had a glass door that could be opened, and contained two frosted glass

panes.

-- In the glass a man's shadow was reflected.

Midori became stiff, unable to move.

Her frozen self remained stooped over the washbasin, in order to cover her bent head in sight of the man's shadow.

The bathroom was dark. Because of that the contours were not definite, but through the frosted glass she knew that someone stood there for sure. The shadow's face could be vaguely seen and did not turn his back on her, so she knew that he was looking into her direction.

Someone was quietly standing right next to the door on the other side. He didn't even stir a little. -- As if it was observing the situation.

-- It wasn't Hirota.

Because he was in the kitchen. It wasn't Reiko either.

-- Anyone of Shibuya Psychic Research?

Answering her own question, "No, it's not", was the only thing she could think of. Then why, she wondered, would he quietly look into her direction. Why, why would he not even stir a little?

It had to be someone who wanted to use the bath and was waiting until Midori left. The bathroom was dark and clothes that were taken off were not seen anywhere. In the first place, if the bath was used, she would certainly have been asked to leave.

-- Then, who was it?

Midori didn't budge. She had a hunch that something bad would happen if she moved. She kept looking at the mirror through upturned eyes, unable to move herself as if paralysis struck her.

Her pulse quickened.

-- Just who is there?

For the first time, the man's shadow shifted. It seemed like Midori had said something, but only her breath sounded out of her throat. It disappeared in the sound of continually streaming water and almost didn't reach Midori's ears.

A hand raised. It looked like one hand was turning the door handle.

Her pulse intensified. It seemed as if her heart would break out of her throat at any time.

The door opened a little without even a sound. Only darkness could be seen through the thin gap. The door opened further. Slowly moving, the shadowy figure over there became exposed.

Midori trembled greatly and raised her face. As a consequence the figure in the back had slipped into Midori's own shadow.

Only Midori's face was reflected in the mirror. -- But Midori couldn't forget that thing behind her back and what she had seen for just a moment.

-- A man. His entire body was stained with a red-brown colour.

-- And.

He was behind her. Right in the shadow of Midori's head.

-- He was holding something in its hand.

Something, something like a rod. A flat thing was attached in front of the rod. And it was dreadfully filthy.

It was fine if she didn't see it. Even though it was one moment, why had she fixed her eyes on it?

Shivers ascended from her feet.

-- Is that -- a hatchet.

That man was holding a hatchet in his hand.

It seemed as if her heart erupted. It seemed like the scream gradually rose to her throat and was squeezed out.

-- He was behind her. Right in her shadow.

And suddenly, the light vanished.

It took her a while to register what had happened. Midori turned around as if she was being flipped. Something had grazed her ear. Perhaps it had been Midori's own hair and it couldn't have been anything else, but then Midori felt the impact of being grazed by a heavy, lethal weapon.

She screamed with all of her strength.

Chapter 7: Part 3

"-- Midori-san!?"

When Hirota was about to jump into the bathroom, he almost stumbled into something.

Right at where he stopped his feet, Midori was sitting by the door, crouched down.

A strong light shone down from the corridor.

"Midori-san, what's wrong!?"

"Somebody... .. was here."

Midori watched the inside of the dressing room. There was no flash light to lit up the dressing room's interior at that time, and made the space where no one was surface with a strange contrast.

"There's no one here."

"There was. He came from the bathroom -- A man holding a hatchet was -- Stop!"

Midori raised her voice because Lin passed by Midori's side and entered the dressing room. He pointed the flash light from one corner to the

other corner in the room. The door of the bathroom remained closed, the glass reflected light and shimmered as if it got wet.

Lin held the door of the bathroom. After he opened the door with a light sound, he shone light at the inside.

"-- There is no one here."

"There was... .. Just now, I certainly saw someone."

Her hand that clung onto Hirota was trembling.

"He came here from the bathroom. He opened the door, got out, held a hatchet -- stained with blood --"

"Hirota-san," he said with a very composed voice. "Take Midori-san to the living room. I'm going to repair the breaker, so please go with her."

It took quite some time before the light was turned on. When Mai dashed in and turned on the switch of the temporarily cut off light, bright light poured down and a strength finally left Midori's shoulders.

"I thought the breaker wouldn't drop out any longer."

Mai's smiling face leaped at her straight away and Midori breathed a sigh of relief.

"... .. Thank you."

"I apologize, but after this we're going to place a camera in the dressing room. Please tell us when you're going to use the bath, because we'll turn it off then."

Midori looked at Mai's face.

"So the investigation will continue... ..?"

"We can't just not investigate what Midori-san has seen, right?"

Midori breathed a sigh of relief. To tell the truth she was afraid if she was told that it was her imagination and if Mai and the others went home."

"Thank you."

"I'm sorry for the inconvenience caused, but please let us investigate a little more.

"No... .. I'm in your care."

"A man holding a hatchet, huh. -- So did something happen in this house back in the day?"

Yasuhara worriedly looked at his notebook at Takigawa's voice. Mai

and Hirota were not inside the base. They were attending to Reiko and Midori and helping them out in the kitchen.

"How strange... ... There shouldn't be anything here though."

"So from when were those newspapers you investigated?"

"The house was built around Shōwa 47, so I took them from about the year 45."

"Wouldn't it be a problem from before the house was built? Be brave and investigate all newspapers that were issued."

Yasuhara looked reproachfully at Takigawa.

"... ... Just now you said that so easily with all your effort right?"

"That's your duty, right? Shōnen Tanteidan."

Yasuhara threw the notebook in the bag.

"If I'm told by the boss to do it, then I'll do so. -- But you know it takes time, so it can't be helped, right? These kind of things happen. When following up on the register or something, I will try to search for the better method that's a little more effective," Yasuhara said, and stood up. "Boss, I'll go back for this reason. I will continue my investigation, so I will contact you if I find something."

"Naru nodded. After they saw Yasuhara off, he looked at Takigawa.

"Aren't you going home, Takigawa-san?"

"It's closing in on my field of expertise, so I'm going to watch the situation for a little while."

After smiling lightly, Naru suddenly said, "Bou-san, do you know of the word 'Kosori'?"

"The one that's got the little tsu taken out of 'kossori'?"

"Beyond the full-length mirror there is 'Kosori'. -- In this case it is?"

Takigawa brooded.

"A person's given name or the name of a spectre or something. What's with it?"

"Mai seems to have obtained that kind of inspiration. She said the full-length mirror is scary."

"... ..I wonder if there really is a spectre like that. 'Satori' is a famous one though. It's just because the name of the apparition changes accordingly per region. There are also many spectres that had the imitative sounds become names. It might be a name that circulates in a region somewhere.

"I see... .."

Naru brooded. Takigawa put his arms together.

"Don't come in, go back, huh. Mai told me the madam said so. -- This naturally means something."

"Naturally, you could say. It's also possible that Mai was pulled along by Reiko-san's words."

"You may as well trust your own subordinate. -- Someone got into the house. Moreover, there was a warning. Right?"

"I suppose."

"So here's the case of Midori-san seeing a man holding a hatchet. Does it look like as if someone is beginning to warn somebody because of the man with the hatchet?"

"... .. I wonder about that."

"Don't just restrict your imagination up until that point, geez. A man holding a hatchet is inside this house. For argument's sake, let's say that A is going to be killed. Then B comes. A warns. -- Don't come in. Go back."

Naru didn't respond to this. After taking a breath he looked at Lin who was watching over the equipment.

-- What do you think?"

Lin turned his head.

"As for me, nothing. Matters of unidentifiable spirits are outside my jurisdiction."

Takigawa glanced at Naru.

"What if you call out Masako-chan?"

Naru frowned for a moment, but for some reason he immediately was in deep thought.

"... ..You're right. We might add up even a little more information... .."

Chapter 7: Part 4

Hirota frowned after hearing that another medium would come.

Having the feeling that the increase of people of unknown stature and the distrust that these guys were mediums, he wondered whether he should put trust in them after all.

His distrust deepened even more when he heard that the one who would come was a medium named Hara Masako.

Where did I hear this name before, he thought, and instantly recalled that Saki had talked about that name sometimes. It was a medium who she saw on variety shows and specials on TV.

Because Hirota especially hated mediums who appeared on television programs, made talents scream and were made to be admired, from the bottom of his heart, he went as far as to think suspiciously of the members of Shibuya Psychic Research.

That Masako, who seemed to have taken up their message and would be coming soon, arrived a little before midnight.

"Thank you for coming at such a late hour."

When Mai went out to meet her and entered the entranceway, Masako blinked a little as if she was a little absent-minded and came back to her senses.

"Ah... ... Yes. Good evening."

The girl looks like a traditional Japanese doll, Hirota thought. He heard the stories from Saki and had seen her on television many times, but her appearance didn't leave much of an impression. When he took a closer look, she was a smallish and beautiful girl. Her glossy, straight hair was ended at her shoulder and it matched her nowadays unusual traditional Japanese attire.

Even though she hadn't used make-up on her small white face, her lips were red, so she really did look like a doll.

"... ... Where is Naru?" Masako said and Mai puffed her cheeks.

"We meet again after a long time and that's the first thing you say?"

"We did meet the week before the last though."

"It was only two weeks ago when we did something fun together. Women's friendships are really brittle, you know."

Masako showed an elegant smile.

"That's what would be called common sense."

"Yes yes."

"Yo, Masako-chan."

Reiko and Midori came together from the living room and Takigawa was the one who waved his hand.

"Long time no see."

"So Takigawa-san was here as well?"

"Yeah, I was. It's only because I have free time though."

"Where are the other people?"

"For now it's only me."

At Takigawa's words, Hirota suddenly remembered an unpleasant premonition. He spoke to Mai who was beside him.

"-- Just how many cooperative workers does Shibuya Psychic Research have?"

"There are four people."

Hirota's face unintentionally stiffened.

"It can't be that... ... all members are going to come, right?"

"Who knows? I guess that depends on the development from now on?"

Without minding Hirota who quickly got disgusted, Mai pointed out Masako.

"Midori-san, this person is Hara Masako-san. This is the client Agawa Midori-san and her mother Reiko-san."

Midori as well as Reiko politely bowed their heads.

"Thank you for coming at this late hour."

"No. I am the one who is grateful for allowing me to intrude your house."

"And this is Midori-san's cousin, Hirota-san."

Masako returned a nod at Hirota who bowed and greeted her. Mai pointed at the inner part of the house.

"The base is here."

After nodding and following after her, Masako abruptly stopped her feet when she reached right in front of the base.

Reiko and Midori who said they would make tea and were about to head toward the kitchen, were also stopped. That's how sudden Masako stopped her feet.

"What's wrong?", Mai said, looking back at Masako. Midori thought it was strange and watched Masako's figure attentively.

Masako raised her finger upright. She pointed it at the full-length mirror

"... .. It's watching us."

"Eh?" Midori looked at the full-length mirror. In that place only the corridor that was illuminated by the somewhat colored light of the incandescent lamp and the people standing here were reflected.

"From that door a spirit is watching us."

Masako clearly stated it was a door.

"It's a man. He's seeing the situation on the inside. He's holding a stick-like thing."

Midori shivered. What was seen just now overlapped with what she had seen. Someone's shadow standing beyond the mirror. Without even making a subtle movement, the figure was seeing the situation with patience.

Her eyes unintentionally closed. If she didn't do it, she felt like she would see it once again.

-- A body stained with blood.

He held in his hand -- a bloody hatchet.

"I can hear voices. But they have no relation to that man. I don't know whose voice this is. It sounds like a male as well as a female."

Midori looked at Masako from the side, who had settled her gaze somewhere fixedly.

"It says, you cannot come in. Go back, and go back and never come here again."

Midori opened her eyes. Those were the words that Reiko often said.

"But perhaps, that may have not been my imagination as well... ..."

She muttered it at a low tone.

"-- Huh?"

Mai asked Masako.

"When I entered the house, I had a strange feeling. It felt as if no one

was inside the house."

Midori heard that and raised her eyebrows. Wasn't that something Mai once said? -- Moreover... ..

"I wondered why there wasn't anyone around. -- Even though Mai was right in front of me."

Mai looked at Masako.

"That... .. When I came to this house, I thought exactly the same thing... .."

"Me too," Midori whispered. Mai, Masako -- and Naru who had come out of the base a while ago and watched over the situation, simultaneously turned to look at Midori.

"It happened when I first came to this house. When I went with my mother to look at the house. -- Even though mother was beside me, I was wondering why she wasn't here. I was wondering where my mother went to... .."

A short silence came over them. Unusually, Midori could vividly recall that strange feeling of that time.

"-- This is stupid."

The one who grunted that was Hirota.

Chapter 7: Part 5

"What are you even saying, Midori-san. Don't go along with these people, saying such strange things."

Midori turned to look at Hirota.

"But, I do remember it for certain. That I had a feeling like that."

Hirota shook his head. He seemed disappointed.

"You were swallowed into this strange atmosphere. -- Or perhaps they heard this from Midori-san talked about it."

"That's not true. I forgot about it until just now. That's why I haven't talked to anyone about this before."

"Then, you swallowed up this atmosphere and just had a feeling like that."

"But," Midori said, but Hirota was already gazing towards the members of Shibuya Psychic Research.

"All of you are overdoing this."

"Wait a minute, Hirota-san!"

Mai raised her voice, but Naru got the better of her.

"What do you mean?"

"You summoned a medium, and you probably wanted to put up some play, but you're overdoing this. You won't deceive me with this stale play."

"But--" Midori said and was looked at by Hirota.

"Midori-san. You couldn't possibly have been thinking that this girl is so amazing, right?"

"I thought so. But --"

"Hear me out. If you think about it, it wouldn't be strange or amazing at all if the girl said these things after she heard it from her colleagues."

"I have not heard anything from them," Masako said, but this was ignored by Hirota.

"If she conspired with her colleagues prior to this, she would have known that aunt said she was being watched by someone and is frightened, that the full-length mirror turned out to be a door and that Midori-san saw a man."

For Midori to be easily swindled like this, she was too nice of a person,

Hirota thought.

"It's all understandable to me. This is their modus operandi. From the beginning they brought in exaggerated equipment and said things directly to have the victim trust them. When they are completely trusted, they suddenly bring in some occult performance and deceive people."

Midori looked straight at Hirota.

"I, to tell the truth, did not believe in things like ghosts. -- But, now it's a little different. Just now, I saw a figure that wasn't a real person."

"It was Midori-san's imagination."

"No, I surely saw it."

"Well, then it must have been an actual person."

"That's impossible. Several cameras were set up around the house and observing, right? How could they come in?"

"It was one of these people. How about that?" Hirota said at once, but there was a strange conviction when he spoke. "Indeed. -- These people. They said there were four colleagues. One of them did it."

"If that's true, where did they vanish to? Until Hirota-san rushed over to the washroom's door, I was staying by the door, isn't that right?"

"What about inside the bathroom. The door of the bathroom that should have been open was closed, right?"

"You know that such a thing is impossible, right? Lin-san went to check inside. No one was inside."

"Midori-san, did you see what was inside?"

Midori was taken aback and shut her mouth.

"At that time the breaker fell out and we were completely surrounded by darkness. There was only the light from the flashlights they were carrying. Lin came inside and checked the bathroom. We felt like confirming together what's inside, but he said there was no one there, so we remained firm by the door and didn't take a look at the inside of the bathroom."

"... .. But."

"What if there was a man in the corner of the bathroom? Or in the empty bath tub? What if they arranged it in advance for Lin not to shine light in the place he stood? -- We quickly took Midori-san back to the living room. Aunt and I were worrying about Midori-san. We wouldn't have realized if someone was secretly taken out of the house during that time."

Hirota looked at Naru who was standing calmly in the corridor.

"This is vicious. -- I think this is extremely vicious."

"Isn't this very far-fetched?"

The one who said that was Reiko. When he turned his glance toward her, Reiko showed a worried smile.

"I have not seen any people other than Shibuya-san and the others. Hirota-san, I think you suspect them too much."

Hirota earnestly glanced at Reiko.

"You can't trust these guys. -- That guy's name isn't even Shibuya or something to begin with."

"Eh," Reiko opened her eyes.

"He's called Oliver Davis," Hirota said and turned to look at Naru.

"-- Isn't that right?"

There was no change to be seen in Naru's facial expression.

"-- And? What about it?"

"Why is it necessary to lie about your name?"

Naru merely expressed a sarcastic smile.

"As you can see, I don't look very much like a foreigner. If I give my real name, I will be taken in doubt by others."

"Oh my," Reiko said. "You're right indeed. Shibuya-san's Japanese is very good, right?"

"That's because my real mother is of Japanese descent."

"Oh, I see."

Reiko laughed and Hirota looked.

"See? Don't suspect people from their faces that much."

Hirota frowned. Reiko was this much poisoned by these people, he thought.

-- Swindlers were good at making people trust them, therefore swindlers remain. Surely, it had to be that.

"Aunt, that guy is a murderer."

Chapter 7: Part 6

Everyone blankly watched Hirota.

With an annoyed feeling Hirota surveyed all of the members.

"Actually I came here because of work."

Midori seemed to be aware of that, but Reiko as well as the others weren't satisfied.

"-- I am someone of Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office's Special Investigation Department."

There was a moment of silence. Subsequently all of them raised their voices. Mai, Masako and even Takigawa were taken by surprise. The ones who didn't raise their voices were Naru and Lin.

"... ..You, did you evade your taxes?"

Takigawa was the one who asked that in confusion. Naru shrugged.

"I don't remember doing that."

"Then, how about bribery?"

"I wonder if it's because I sent a Japanese politician money and received the convenience of consulting a place of worship?"

"... .. There's just no way... .. No matter how much I think about it."

Hirota clicked his tongue at their carefree conversation.

"You're not suspected of those types of things. For good or evil, however."

Hirota gazed at Naru.

"I only investigate the fact that you are a key suspect in the case of the abandonment of your own brother Eugene Davis's corpse that was found this summer.

Takigawa looked dumbfoundedly at Hirota.

"... .. That guy, in other words, does that mean Naru-bou is suspected of killing his older brother?"

"Naturally, that's the case."

"While it may be true that this guy certainly has some problems with his personality as well as his feelings, I don't think he's ill enough to kill a person."

"He knew where to find the victim's corpse. How?"

Information about the corpse's discovery by the police in Nagano prefecture came in at the end of summer. It was said that divers discovered a corpse that was sunk inside a dammed lake. Naru had been the one who employed those divers and made them search for a corpse.

He had requested the divers to search for a corpse from the beginning. They had announced that the corpse was wrapped in a silver sheet beforehand.

"I know that you're not going to agree, but he already knew. Because this guy has got a special ability--"

"He knew because of his psychic ability, you were going to say, right? That was also written in the records. -- But."

Hirota stared at Naru's expressionless face.

"That sort of thing does not exist. Not to mention there's no proof that this guy has got that kind of power. Supposing he didn't have something like a psychic ability, how would he have known that his older brother's corpse was there? -- Isn't it obvious that he himself is the criminal or that he did it with an accomplice, right?"

There were three units stationed in the Tokyo District Public Prosecutor's Office Special Investigation Department. Those three were the Intellectual Crime Unit, the Financial and Business Affairs Unit and the Direct Information Unit. The Intellectual Crime Unit was in charge of

electoral irregularities, corruption, business embezzlements and the like, and had a strong image of being the stars of the department. The Financial and Business Affairs Unit was used for tax evasions and economical cases and the Direct Information Unit was in charge of relatively small scope affairs within the accusation and indictment cases. Inside this Direct Information Unit a small group existed with one public prosecutor in charge and one examination official.

Outwardly this post had no name, but the spirit cases group was popularly known as the Zero Unit. It was a stupid pun made out of spirit (rei) and zero (rei) by the elites who had no sense of humor (Saki had claimed).

Hirota and Saki were the mere two prosecution officials attached to this Zero Unit.

Hirota boiled a little as he thought back to these things. He had passed the civil service examination with much hardship, and as desired he became a prosecution official, at the admired duty station, Tokyo District Public Prosecutor's Office Special Investigation Department, he was assigned to a leisure post that had nothing to do with either corruption or suspicion and was called the Tanuki by the prosecutor-in-charge Kurahashi. It didn't mean that he was a faker or anything. Only there it meant he was a good-for-nothing like a Shigaraki ware ornament of a Tanuki.

Despite this he couldn't neglect his work. Hirota had a faithful personality. With his sincerity, he was diligent every day at work.

The Zero Unit was put in charge of cases that are thought to be related to matters like psychic phenomena, psychic abilities and curses. Their

work is to reconsider cases that were abandoned as incomprehensible by the investigators on scene from their own point of view. As the only unit existing in Japan for this, cases outside their jurisdiction are frequently being forwarded to them via a higher prosecutor department.

Day after day he looked over the documents and investigative notes that were sent to them from all directions. The case of the abandoned corpse of foreigner Eugene Davis was the one Hirota had his eyes on out of suspicion.

Mai and Takigawa were unable to close their gaping mouths.

"As a theory it's perfect. But don't you think this theory is a bit far-fetched?"

With a composed voice Naru answered to Takigawa who just said that.

"... .. Why thank you for taking the trouble."

Hirota glared at Naru.

"-- And? Certainly you already investigated whether or not I was in Japan at the time of my older brother's death, didn't you?"

"Of course I had it investigated. -- But you know, in this age a thing called passport forgery exists."

"I see," Naru smiled. "If that means you find me suspicious, feel free to

investigate me as much as you like. It's your choice."

"Choice, you say?"

"Unfortunately I don't know Japanese law very well, but do you hold any legal force in this place as of this moment?"

"I'm still privately investigating."

"Well then, is it fine if you can let me get back to work? I dislike wasting time."

"You say it's a waste of time?"

Naru merely expressed a smile on his beautiful face.

"It's nothing more than a waste that your organization stooped down to giving such a narrow-minded, unintelligent, foolish person this kind of duty."

Hirota glowed in anger and saw red before his eyes.

"Why you!" Hirota yelled, but his arm was seized.

"Please, -- Forgive him."

It was Reiko. She was holding onto Hirota's arm with a desperate look.

"Please spare that child at least!!"

Hirota frowned. Reiko's fingernails were buried into him.

"Please, don't kill him!!"

A surprised Hirota heard a dignified voice.

"Naru. -- There is a woman at that person's back."

Masako looked straight at Reiko.

"It's the spirit of someone who was killed in this house."

Afterword

Afterword

To new people, pleased to meet you.

To people who I have met before, thank you once again.

It is time for the afterword. I am the author Ono.

It's been one year since my last book. What I wrote last time was a fantasy book, so it's been a while since I wrote anything other than fantasy.

I think I may have disappointed people who took obtained this book and said, "What, it's not a series of cases?". I truly apologize to those people. Actually I've become a person who is into horror by nature. Therefore this type of work is my main road, but there's no way I will forget about the Twelve Kingdoms series. The plans for publication are near, so please forgive me.

-- I think there may be some people who are surprised at my way of writing. You who thought, "The previous afterwords were different somehow." -- Indeed, I'm talking about you (laughs).

Well, I made you wait for a long time, but the much rumoured 'will it or will it not?' continuation came out after all. I received plenty of threats and teary persuasions, thank you very much. ♥ Thanks to you these

fellows have appeared again.

... .. Somehow, after finally doing this, I feel giddy even if I say so myself.

I debuted in the year 1988, so 6 years have already passed since then. My debut work was from the same X Bunko as this work, but it was published from the famous Teens Heart with a pink binding. That time was the golden age of love stories and then it was the case that I wrote a love story just like the others, but when I look back at that time I am shocked with how I could have survived it. Anyway, love stories are not far beyond my ability, but actually, I got the impression that my friends who heard the story of my debut were surprised or amazed.

The content is also far from from a love story and though it's painful and tragic, I still think it's far from a work that entertains a girl's feelings. There have been no words of gratitude from the benevolent fans who stayed in touch since then.

... .. In any case, although I somehow debuted and even though I wrote a love story, I was in dire distress. The genre I was looking for somehow had to be a genre that would be easy for me to write and something that was enjoyable for the readers as well. The genre was called horror.

Originally I was a huge fan of horror movies. I loved horror stories by authors like King and Saul and I love the nostalgic scary manga. I am the type who goes out to look if I hear ghosts appear in such-and-such places and tell a hundred stories where people gather, so I think I have an interest in scary things to begin with. If it's horror, I want to try write it, I might be able to write it, besides I considered that girls may be interested in those things, I wrote a horror story -- or better said, a ghost story.

It gained unexpected popularity and was given one series at Teens Heart. Because I made horror my foothold and continued to write fantasy with a strong sense of horror, and fantasy without horror up until today, I feel like it wouldn't be an exaggeration if I said that it's thanks to horror that I somehow survived the intense up and downs of the junior novel world.

For that reason, horror is my own home ground after all. Late at night when all sounds die in a silence, when I think about how to make my stories scary, is the most enjoyable and the best time I feel like working.

This work is the sequel to Teens Heart's popular Evil Spirits series. Fortunately it was popular, so when the series was just about to end, I received a lot of correspondence calling for me not to stop it. As a writer, the Evil Spirits series was the series that sustained my living for a full nine years. so I myself feel quite attached to it as well. For this reason I felt inclined to write a continuation.

Of course, I thought about the people who are new to this work and as much as possible I took into consideration as not to inconvenience the people who don't know the series before. I intend to let people who know the Evil Spirits series enjoy it as a continuation and let people who did not know about it enjoy it as an independent work as far as possible. Because of this I created a few characters that makes you wonder why they have appeared. I did that for the story continuation, so I beg your pardon.

However, since it's a sequel at any rate, if you're able to read either, I think it would be more enjoyable to read it in a chronological fashion starting from Teens Heart. I think it might be a little difficult to obtain it,

but I think it's still possible to order it from a book-store (if that's not the case, what should be done... ..). If you read volume one and grew interested, I'm pleased to meet you. -- Wow, this is unusual. I'm doing business (laughs).

At the time of writing this story I went back to reading the previous series and I was astonished with the surplus amount of line breaks in my early works even if I say so myself. The age of White Heart's target audience is considerably different, so it's no good if it is extremely unsuitable. In each volume, the editor took what was given up on into good line breaks and increased the kanji. I smiled bitterly at seeing those changes as it revealed my own struggling style.

Actually it used to be decided that the protagonist had to be an ordinary girl and in the first person narrative of that girl. Which reminds me, I thought "Well then, let's write a novel only in first person narrative," and I deeply recall how the plot of the previous series was constructed like that. Because I received teaching on how to properly write a novel by people in the field of mystery novels, I wasn't able to describe falsehoods in a third person narrative. I dearly remember how I was hooked at that point and thought about all the spoilers in the series.

The rules of the afterword are also completely different. I was told to, "keep it light if possible," so I made effort to do it that way. It was the afore-mentioned person (laughs), and the title was light as well. Such as "Evil Spirits Abound!?". By the way, I'll list the titles here, start from "Evil Spirits Abound!?" to "There really are a lot of Evil Spirits!" "There are so many Evil Spirits, I can't sleep" "The Evil Spirit is all alone" "I don't want to be an Evil Spirit!" "Don't call me an Evil Spirit" "I'm okay with Evil Spirits! Volume 1 and 2", which is the order of all seven works, eight volumes. Even if I say so myself, any of these titles do not seem understandable. (laughs).

Although there was talk about a sequel before this, the entire eight volume series, a horror done in first person, I discovered something like a type of wall (certainly there are advantages as well). I thought it would be interesting if there wasn't any wall and received the approval to carry it over from Teens Heart to White Heart.

With White Heart as well, the illustration changed, and it is a considerable change compared to the previous series. Even so, the manner of writing the structure of the story hasn't changed. This was also the same when I was writing fantasy. One might say, what is learned in the cradle is carried to the grave.

Anyway, if you liked volume one, it would be great to meet as well in the second volume. Just to be on the safe side, as usual I handed in the manuscript for both volumes at the same time, so the second volume will be published next month. I'm in your care.